Miss Jimmy

BY

Laura E. Richards

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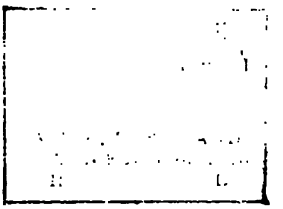

The Picnic

(*See page 91*)

MISS JIMMY

BY
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Author of
"Captain January," "The Wooing of Calvin Parks"
"Geoffrey Strong," "Mrs. Tree," etc.

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MISS JIMMY

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TO

G. E. H.

PHYSICIAN AND FRIEND,
THIS STORY IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED

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MISS JIMMY

CHAPTER I

RETROSPECTIVE

SHE was christened Jemima. Her father, Silas Dolly, was of the opinion that if Jemima was good enough for his mother, it was good enough for the red bundle that squalled in the spare chamber. But no one ever called Miss Jimmy "Jemima," except Earl Royal, and, as she said, he would; you had only to look at him. When he said "Jemi*i*ma!" with an upward whine on the *i*, Miss Jimmy had to hold tight on to whatever was in her hand, plate, saucepan or knitting, to keep from throwing it at him.

Mrs. Dolly, a silent woman who suffered from a suppression of sentiment, resented the homely name which had been thrust upon her first-born child, and took revenge

by naming the second, born a month after Mr. Dolly's death, Sylphine Arletta.

Then nature took the matter in charge, and gave the child the form of a baby giantess, and the heart of a mouse.

"Who ever would dream they were sisters?" Mrs. Dolly lamented one day to a neighbor. "Sylphine is two full years younger, and it takes twice the goods to cover her form than what it does Jimmy."

"Is that so?" said the neighbor sympathetically.

"It is so!" The brea'th of her shoulders — she might be a yearlin' calf, Mrs. Shute; and as for her limbs — you look at here!" She lifted the blue calico frock of her younger daughter.

"My land! they be massive, be'n't they?" exclaimed Mrs. Shute. "I don't know as ever I see limbs like them on a child. They look like piano limbs. And little Jimmy so small and scanty, what you might call a skimpy pattern all around."

"I think bigger'n she does!" said Jimmy, who was folding clothes beside her mother, already, at six, with the deft light touch we all came to know so well.

Mrs. Dolly, herself a woman of large frame, looked down reprovingly at the scrap of humanity beside her. "Little girls should be seen and not heard!" she said mildly.

"Yes'm," replied Jimmy, "I didn't know as you did see me. Shall I take Finey out of the sticky fly paper?"

Sylphine grew up beautiful and massive; "Fine Dolly" she was called, poor child. When the sisters were at the academy together, one could only think of a white heifer guarded by a black and tan terrier. Jimmy kept close beside her sister, fiercely watchful, fiercely jealous, flying into a rage when Finey missed in spelling (which she usually did) and misspelling herself of set purpose, to the great annoyance of the teacher. Jimmy was a born speller, and she

knew it. When a boy invited Finey to a party, it was not Mrs. Dolly who examined him rigorously as to ways and means, manners and morals, it was Sister Jimmy.

A hawk's keen sight ye cannot blind, ye could not Jimmy's; if the boy was not "all right" in every particular, he was summarily dismissed with "Finey ain't goin'"! If he rebelled, and came to the house on the appointed evening, he was met at the door by the black and tan, bristling and showing her teeth. Finey might be weeping in the back kitchen, Mrs. Dolly murmuring in the entry, "Don't you think perhaps just this once, Jimmy?" Bang went the door, click went the key. The swain huffed off grumbling, and Jimmy came cheerfully in to revive her drooping sister, by making some of her wonderful fudge or honey candy.

After all, Finey liked eating better than anything else. Hers was a simple organism, and three meals a day furnished food for her mind as well as her body.

RETROSPECTIVE

Once Jimmy was exclaiming over the glory of a stormy sunset, and Finey listened with growing wonder. "Why," she said, "you feel about it the way I did about the pie at dinner!"

But Fate is too much, sometimes, even for watchful terriers. Taking the shape of a certain great-aunt in Wisconsin, Fate beckoned to Jimmy, demanding care and tendance during an illness.

She went, full of forebodings, which were amply fulfilled; she was recalled six months later by the news of her mother's death, and of Sylphine's marriage to Earl Royal.

After that, as everyone knows, Miss Jimmy went off to a city hospital to study nursing, and took her di-plomy, and stayed in the city five years, succeeding "something wonderful," we heard. Then Finey's health began to fail, and Jimmy took her name off the nurses' register and came back to the village; and then it was that she became, for better for worse, for

richer for poorer, our Miss Jimmy. Of course her sister was her first care, but Miss Jimmy was so wonderfully quick that she could, as Mrs. Shute expressed it, run round Finey three times while the latter was getting her mouth open. So she had the morning work done up, and the invalid washed, dressed and settled for her nap, all in the turn of a hand.

Then, before dinner had to go on, and again in the afternoon when the dishes were done up and Mrs. Royal was dressed to receive callers, Miss Jimmy had time to do what she called her puttering. Like a humming-bird she darted in and out of one house after another. Old Mrs. Nim's knee, old Miss Rickett's poor back, were rubbed and kneaded till the good souls fairly purred with relief and comfort. Mrs. Quin's baby was bathed and dressed, and her gruel made and served, and an extra jug of it set away where "He" could find it come night and warm it for her; and so on and so on, down

one side of the street and up the other.

"You've been gone a terrible long time, Jimmy!" Mrs. Royal would say repiningly, when finally the little alert figure whisked in at the door.

"Did you want anything, honey? What was it?"

"N—no, I don't know as I did, but I might have thought of something if you'd been here. It is dreadful tryin' to see you runnin' in and out of all the houses and me sit here with not a soul to speak to."

"There! didn't Sarah Kitten come in? She swore black and blue she would."

"Oh, yes, she come in, but I don't know but I'd full as lieves she hadn't. She talked full stream about her dyspepsia the endurin' time, till I felt as if I never could relish anything again. I feel a goneness now, sister. I wish't you would see if there is a piece of that lemon pie left."

Then it might happen that Mr. Royal would come in and stand behind a chair

with his hands folded on the back of it as if about to say, "Let us unite in prayer!" Instead of that, he would shake his head silently for several minutes, gazing mournfully at his wife the while. This caused Miss Jimmy to undergo metempsychosis, and from humming-bird to become terrier once more.

"What's the matter?" she would snap. "Afraid there is something inside it? 'Twould rattle if there was."

"Jemima!" Mr. Royal would reply solemnly, "Sylphine is failing up. I can see her fail before my bodily eyes. Her days is num—"

Here he was apt to be hustled out of the room with scant ceremony and the door slammed on his protesting back, Jimmy returning to cheer the weeping Finey, and tell her vehemently that good Dolly stuff would outlive a dozen limb-shackle. putty-jointed Royals, see if it didn't!

Mrs. Royal's days were doubtless num-

bered, but the sum was a round one. Perhaps after all the question of her health had been, as Mrs. Shute shrewdly surmised, chiefly a pining for the stimulus of her sister's presence. "She wasn't homesick," said Mrs. Shute. "She was Jim-sick! That was what ailed her."

"But she didn't get well when Miss Jimmy came!" it was objected.

"That's because of the stuff she's made of. You punch a hole in injy rubber, or riz dough, and it springs right to; you punch a hole in putty, and there it stays. Sylphine Dolly — I should say Royal — is putty."

However it was, Mrs. Royal, once established as an interesting invalid, accepted her lot placidly, and showed no desire to change it. She had always liked to "set," as she expressed it; she never saw any sense in ramblin' and rushin' round the way sister did. Give her a good rocker set near the window, where she could see the "pass,"

and someone to run in now and then, and she didn't ask anything more only her three meals a day, and a bite in between at such times as she felt a goneness.

"I don't know but it's better as it is!" Miss Jimmy said. "Yes, Mrs. Shute, I expect, take one thing with another, it's better as it is. I've got Finey right under my eye where I want her. We'd get along first rate, me and Finey, if it wasn't for Earl Royal!"

CHAPTER II

EARL ROYAL

EARL ROYAL was a small man, light haired and pasty, with blinking eyes and a general effect of sour milk and water. The only son of his mother, and she with a taste for patent medicines, he had grown up in an atmosphere of "doctoring" which had permanently biassed his nature. His father had been a druggist in a neighboring town; and after his death the widow continued to receive the "*Druggist's Weekly Digest*," which with the addition of the family Bible filled and bounded her field of literature.

Earl learned to read from the advertisements of Beecham's Pills and Quaker Bitters. The sitting-room was adorned with calendars and posters, setting forth the wonders of various remedies and cosmetics,

and his youthful fancy was influenced by the smiling exponents of Cherrifoam and Goldilene.

It was Mrs. Royal's custom to read aloud in the evening from the "*Digest*"; she delighted in the records of wonderful cures wrought by "Kiso's Kure for Konsumption," or Dr. Penny's Panaceal Plasters.

She read with slow emphasis, savoring each detail as she mouthed it. The boy listened eagerly to the recital of how Mrs. Cynthia Bogardus, Fountain City, Nebraska, "suffered grievously for seven years from rheumatism, the pain being something dreadful, and wasted to a shadow till a friend recommended her to use Panaceal Plasters; she now weighs 187 1-2 pounds, and is light on her feet as a girl and enjoys a social dance equal to any."

Listening to this and similar tales, the boy's eyes would turn to his mother, gaunt and yellow, her wrinkled face coming to a point in the end of her nose as she bent

over the paper; then they would go back to the wall and brood on the highly-colored creations whose flashing smiles and willowy (or billowy) forms seemed to invite him to another world far removed from this homely room with its air-tight stove and rag carpet. A world of crimson and gold, of pearl and rose. Silently he made up his mind that some day, when he was a man and had made a fortune, he would marry a woman who looked like one of those pictures. He inclined to the creamy, ample Sultana who, reclining amid satin cushions, gazed with dreamy ardor on a bottle of Circassian Beautifier which she held in her hand; but if he did not find her the Cherrifoam girl would do, with her arch smiles and bewitching dimples.

He never doubted that all these beauties were portraits from life; his mind was of a literal cast.

Earl never made his fortune; as Miss Jimmy said, you had only to look at him.

But the paternal druggist had made a comfortable little sum by the sale of remedies, (usually containing a certain per cent of alcohol) and Mrs. Royal was considered "a lean spender, and a barebones giver;" at her death Earl found himself in possession of the comfortable sum rather augmented than diminished.

After some reflection, he selected the freshest-looking drugs from the assortment in the barn chamber (rejected by the firm which had replaced his father), added some bottles of bitters and elixirs, and came over to set up his sign in our village.

We had never had a druggist of our own before; we had had to go to the Forks for our cough syrups and soda mints; there was quite a sensation when "*Earl Royal*" appeared in shining gold on a black ground over the door of the little store lately occupied by Miss Bantam, who sold calico and thread and needles.

We were disappointed when the owner

of the regal name displayed blinking eyes and an aspect of sour milk and water; but still he was tolerably spruce in those days, and the stone in his scarf might be a real diamond for aught we knew. And — he was a single man! There were few single men of marriageable age in the village. Dr. Wiseman was a widower, but he was seventy-four, and they did say that his habit of trying remedies on his wife was what carried her off at sixty-two, when she came of a stock that were commonly (and uncommonly) spry at ninety.

Then there was Mr. Billy Batchelder, but we all knew that he could not afford to marry; for had he not told us all so; the young with a long side glance and a smothered sigh, the old with cheerful and literal frankness? Altogether, there was a mild flutter in the village at the advent of Earl Royal; but it was a brief one. One evening, less than a month after the black and gold sign was put up, while Mr. Royal was

musing over a glass of Moxie, there entered to him the Sultana of his dreams; fine Dolly, a white shawl over her dark hair, her great eyes piteous with tears. Mother was taken real sick, and all of a sudden, and sister was out west. Dr. Wiseman wanted he should make up the prescription right away, please! would it take him long? Oh, would he hasten all he could, because sister was away, and mother was *real* sick!

The piteous eyes, the soft creamy complexion, the red lips, quivering and drooping — these things produced strange feelings in the bosom of Earl Royal. He saw the lovely girl, not in the pink-sprigged calico of her actual wear, but enveloped in the crimson and gold, the rose and pearl, of his boyhood dreams. She floated on sunset clouds, she reclined on satin pillows; she was Beauty, Grace, Desirableness. His somewhat wizened heart gave an unaccustomed flutter, and the throb, while disquieting, brought him a sense of assur-

ance. "This," he said to himself, "is Mrs. Earl Royal."

"I'll bring it up myself, lady!" he said aloud; "you tell me where the house is, and then you can go right back to your parent — I have had a mother myself — and I'll fetch it in ten minutes."

So it began, a brief courtship and a successful one. Finey was not used to saying no; sister Jimmy always did that for her; besides, she thought Mr. Royal an elegant man, and it was comforting to be given crimson fluids and told with authority that they would soothe her in her grief.

Dr. Wiseman had never thought of giving her anything, had hardly noticed her after her poor mother was gone, except to grunt kindly "Send for Jimmy!"

When he brought the medicine, Finey begged him to step inside; and house of sickness though it was, Mr. Royal was struck by its cheerful and kindly air. It contrasted pleasantly with his rather dreary

room at Miss Bantam's; he saw a chair that was his ideal of what a chair should be; the wood fire purred and crackled invitingly. When Finey's soft hand proffered him a quarter, he felt a singular impulse to refuse the payment; he overcame the impulse, but he said again in his heart, " This is Mrs. Earl Royal! "

Well, as Miss Jimmy said, so it was to be, and so it was. Finey meant to write immediately, but that too was a thing that Jimmy had always done; briefly, it was a week before Jimmy heard of her mother's death. Meantime some words dropped by a customer concerning the elder Miss Dolly gave Mr. Royal a feeling that it would be well for him to secure his Sultana without delay. He told Finey that she was his choice for life, and she assented with a murmur half frightened, all pleased. He told her that in her present nervous condition — she was chewing cardamom seeds at the moment, and looked like a beautiful cow —

anything in the nature of fuss and feathers would be dangerous, and that the sooner she was in the hands of them as would care for her — oh, Jimmy! Jimmy! — the better. Finey did murmur something about waiting till sister came, but she was overruled: Earl Royal had a kind of squirrel-like alertness when there was a question of getting his own way. Mr. Slocum the pastor was away, and Lawyer Crane saw no reason why Finey should not marry — until Mrs. Crane told him when he came home, and then it was too late.

"Joshua Crane, I thought you had *some* sense!" the lady said. "Not much, but just a mite. This man hasn't been here a month; not one month; nobody knows anything about him — what say? Paid his rent in advance? That proves he has a good disposition, don't it? And here he is set down in Jimmy's house, in Jimmy's place, and she not knowing to one single thing about it: I call it a burning shame,

and if you sleep in your bed this night, Joshua Crane, it will be the sleep of the fool; that's all *I* have to say!"

It was not all she had to say; indeed, the whole village bayed and yapped around Lawyer Crane for some days, till Jimmy came. Then all clamor ceased.

Cyrus Bantam, the stage driver, greeted her at the station with "Well, Jimmy! I suppose you know Finey's got married?"

Just for a second, Cyrus said, Jimmy's eyes blazed up like kerosene on kindlin's — but she set her mouth that way she has; "If she has, I presume I do!" was every word she said.

No one save Earl Royal saw the look Miss Jimmy gave him when they met in the hall. Finey pressed forward, babbling nervously: "Sister, this is my husband, Mr. Royal. This is Sister Jimmy, Earl. I want you should get real well acquainted — Mr. Royal thought I wasn't well enough to be alone, sister, and you was away, and

mother —" Finey wept gently. Mr. Royal blinked rapidly, and opened and shut his mouth several times.

" How do you do, Mr. Royal? " said Miss Jimmy, " you are a smart man."

CHAPTER III

NEIGHBORS ALL

Now it is high time to have done with reminiscences. The story really begins with the time when, as I said, Miss Jimmy came home to stay, and became our Miss Jimmy.

We needed her. There were a good many old people in the village, and — at that time — a good many sick ones. People did not know how to take care of themselves then as they do now; then, too, Mrs. Shute thought there were some who enjoyed poor health.

"You tell me a mite about them!" said Miss Jimmy, the evening after she returned, sitting in Mrs. Shute's comfortable living room, toeing off a stocking for all the world as if she had never been away. "Ten years

makes considerable change in a place." "That's right!" said Mrs. Shute thoughtfully. "It does so; though take Tupham from day to day, and you'd say there was no change to it. Well — I'll begin right round here. Take Captain Applegate! you recollect him? Well, of course! Well! Cap'n Apple, as the boys call him, is smart, and as fine a man of his years as you'll find; but yet he's older than what he was ten years ago. He has good health, but he walks feeble to what he did; he'd spring out, you remember, real dashing, when he walked, where now he favors his feet; I expect his corns trouble him, and his eyesight isn't what it was; but he's a fine old gentleman still."

"Who does for him since Mrs. Applegate died?"

"Jane Burrill. It's a beautiful home for Jane, and she appreciates it. She thinks the world of the Cap'n, and makes of him — too much, some think; but she is a good

woman, Jane is, and does her duty according to her lights."

"Wasn't she a kind of mournful body?"

"That's right! that's right! that's all the trouble with Jane. She always had a tendency to mourn, and it grows with her years. I do wish Cap'n had a more cheerful person to live with; but we all have our failings; he might do worse than Jane, certainly. She's a sufferer too; something spinal. Dr. Wiseman says she'll never be any better than she is, nor any worse — special, that is — till her time comes; but she's always wishful, and tries every new thing she sees in the papers. You know how some are. Earl Royal might have made a living out of her alone, the stuff she has bought these three years past.

"Speaking of Earl Royal, Jimmy, how is Finey? I hear he's giving it out that she's failing."

"Well, she isn't!" Miss Jimmy announced calmly. "Finey's got a mite run

down, that's all. She needs to be chirked up, Mrs. Shute; that's all is the matter with Finey."

"Is that so? Well, I am glad to hear it, I'm sure. I expect we all need chirking up, Jimmy, and I expect you are going to do it for us. I'm real glad you've come home.

"I expect we've got sort of mossed over!" she added after a few moments of reflective knitting. "There's few come and go to what there used to be, here in Tupham; we kind of need a new start."

"Who lives in the Batchelder house?"

"Aunt Lindy and Billy: they haven't changed any! I don't know but Billy has been waiting for you all this time, Jimmy. I always said he wanted to marry you, you know."

"I know you did: I expect he's full as well off with Aunt Lindy."

"She purrs over him like a mother cat!" Mrs. Shute chuckled, shaking her head.

"There! when I go in there and find them sitting in their two chairs the two sides of the fire, I almost expect to hear them say '*Meow!*' to each other. But the cocks crow 'Billy' to her, and he is good to her, though he keeps a snug hold on every cent that comes into the house. "Billy Batchelder has fifty thousand dollars if he has a cent, and Aunt Lindy has turned her Sunday dress twice. Now *that* is gossip, and I am ashamed!"

"Where are all the young folks?" asked Miss Jimmy. "You haven't told me about anybody but what's forty and past. Where's your Sam?"

"If you'd have gone into the post-office you'd have found out;" replied Mrs. Shute proudly. "Sam is postmaster, and the best we've had in many a year. Sam married Lottie Dorlin, and they have a beautiful little family; Ed. has done well too: he's clerk in to Perry's store. And Miry lives up street: — she married Abram Sawyer, and

she's doing well. Yes, I have a great deal to be thankful for, and I have the six handsomest grandchildren in the State. Yes, there's some nice children growing up in Tupham."

"How's Persis? Finey says she isn't well."

Mrs. Shute's smooth brow clouded, and she glanced over her shoulder; when she spoke it was in a lower key. "Persis isn't over an' above well," she said slowly. "I'm in hopes she'll pick up soon, though."

She knitted for some minutes in silence, and Miss Jimmy waited.

"Tell you the truth — " Mrs. Shute's laughed a little tremulously —" Persis is one of the folks who need you, Jimmy; my way of thinking. Minute I heard you was coming, I gave thanks where and when they was due. She — hush! don't say a word! here she is!"

A handsome, sullen-looking girl came in, and returned Miss Jimmy's cordial greeting

listlessly. We had our own ideas about Persis Shute. She had always been spoiled, being the youngest and her mother's darling. She was supposed to be a "blight," by which we meant that she had been crossed in love: and indeed, it was only since Jim Powell went to sea a year ago that Persis had behaved so.

"Well, Persis," said Miss Jimmy cheerily, "how's Checkerberry Pasture?"

A gleam came into the dark eyes, and the girl's face lightened for a moment, as if in spite of herself; then the cloud dropped again.

"It's there, I expect. I haven't been there this year."

"Well, we'll go! I'll come for you some morning when the sun gets a little higher."

"What's your hurry, Jimmy?" for Miss Jimmy had risen, and was stowing away her knitting in a capacious pocket.

"I must be going; it's getting on toward

supper time, and I think maybe I'll look in on Cap'n Apple on my way home. Good-bye, Mrs. Shute! I've had a real good time!"

Captain Applegate was sitting at his window as Miss Jimmy came along the street; his head drooped rather mournfully as he gazed at his "view," a glimpse of the river between two great elms at the corner, but he raised it as the light figure came quickly along the street. "There's someone walks smart!" he said. "Why, it's Jimmy Dolly, I am — Why, I do believe she's coming in here. Well, I declare!"

Miss Burrill, a lean, anxious looking woman with a plaintive bleat, rose from her seat and came forward.

"She is so!" she lamented. "And you just going to have your nap, Captain! I'll take her into the parlor, dear!"

"Nothing of the sort!" cried the Captain. "You'll do nothing of the sort, Jane Burrill. You — you — how d'ye do,

Jimmy? How d'ye do? Come right in! Well, well! this is great!"

He had Miss Jimmy by both hands, and she returned his shake heartily.

"The second visit I've paid!" the little woman announced gleefully. "I had to go to Mrs. Shute's first, she's almost an aunt as you might say — she and mother were girls together, you know — but you had to come next, Cap'n. And if you aren't looking well! Why, why! what have you been doing to yourself these ten years past?"

"Growing old, I expect!" said Captain Applegate with a tremulous little laugh; "or so they seem to think."

"He's feeble!" put in Miss Burrill, who had been plaintively hovering. "How are you, Jimmy? You look well, I must say. Yes, Cap'n's grown feeble; he feels his years. I tell him it's but nature after his long life; but —"

"Now I want to see everything!" exclaimed Miss Jimmy. "There's the *Fly-*

away! oh, now I *have* come home!"

She bent eagerly over an exquisite little model of a full-rigged ship under a glass cover. Captain Applegate came and stood beside her, a gentle pride shining in his blue eyes. "She was a fine vessel!" he said; "none finer in her day."

"Nor a finer skipper! What was that rhyme mother used to tell me?

The Flyaway and her skipper,
Both on em's smart and both on em's chipper!"

"Now! now!" Cap'n Applegate blushed like a girl. "There! I haven't heard that for forty years, and think of you remembering it! Why, you weren't born when the boys used to say that. Ah! well, I'm an old man!"

"That's what I say!" Miss Burrill put in, with a tender shake of her head. "It's sad bringing up memories of youth to the aged; it makes them feel that they are passing away. Don't you think you'd feel

better to sit down, Cap'n Applegate? You've been on your feet a good while, dearie."

"No, I don't!" snapped the Captain. "You want me to sit till I grow to my chair, I believe."

"He's childish!" Miss Burrill turned to the visitor with a pitying smile. "The best of men, I tell them, but he's childish, and it grows on him. What can you expect, when —"

"*Here's my sampler!*" cried Miss Jimmy. "I declare, I had — well, not forgotten it, but say not thought of it, for all the years that ever were. Don't you remember, Cap'n Apple? I was just eight years old when I finished it, and nothing would do but I must give it to Mrs. Applegate, because she had been so good to me, and taught me satin-stitch. You made the frame, don't you remember? Isn't it a beauty? Well! well! those are pretty good stitches, if I did make them."

"You were a smart little piece, no mistake about that!" and the old gentleman bent beside her to inspect the sampler, neatly framed in sea-shells. "Now I haven't looked close at this, not for years, as you say. What does it say here, in these little fine letters? My old eyes can't make out."

"I don't wonder. I don't know whether mine can. Let me see!"

> "Jimmy Dolly is my name,
> America is my nation;
> Sylphine is my sister dear,
> And Mrs. Applegate my admiration."

"Now there!" Miss Jimmy clapped her little hands delightedly. "I suppose the proudest moment of my life was when I finished that last word, Cap'n Apple. Mother wanted me to put the usual thing,

> "Tupham is my dwelling-place,
> And heaven my destination."

but I wouldn't. 'I may not stay in Tupham

all my life,' I said, 'and I might grow up wicked, so I wouldn't get to heaven, or Finey might, and I wouldn't go a step without her.' Poor mother! she thought that was a terrible way for a child to talk, and I suppose 'twas naughty. I expect I was a limb, Cap'n Apple, wasn't I?"

"Nothing of the sort! nothing of the sort!" cried the Captain. "You were the smartest piece in the village, I know that; and my wife thought the world of ye, I know that too, and that's character enough, to my thinking. I well remember how pleased she was at your working that last line to speak pleasantly of her. 'That little Jimmy,' she said, 'is certainly beyond all!' I can hear her say it. But Jimmy," he added after a pause, "if you had put it the old way, 'twould have come true now, wouldn't it? You've come home to stay now, haven't you?"

His voice trembled, with the wistful note of age; his blue eyes were wistful too.

Miss Jimmy laid her hand on his arm. "Tupham is my dwelling-place!" she said. "I've come to stay as long as I'm wanted, Cap'n Apple."

The old man drew a long breath of content. "Then you'll stay my time out, and I expect yours too!" he said comfortably.

"Ah!" said Jane Burrill. "It won't be long, it's not likely. Brief life is here our—"

"Walk as far as the corner with me, won't you, Cap'n Applegate?" asked Miss Jimmy, abruptly. "Do! The sun's going to set clear; it's a lovely afternoon."

"Oh, Jimmy, I don't believe he'd better. He's been out once to-day, and he's tottery on his feet."

"Where's your hat?" Miss Jimmy ignored the plaintive bleatings. "Want a stick? You don't need one any more than a toad needs a tail, but a man likes something to flourish; I know 'em!"

Sure enough, Cap'n Applegate flourished

his stick with quite an air, as he and Miss Jimmy walked off together. He was a handsome old man, the side whiskers of his youth neatly kept, his abundant white hair carefully brushed, his eyes as blue as the sea for which he longed. Jane Burrill often wept over his linen, picturing him to herself laid out in his last sleep, but — possibly with a view to this — she kept it in exquisite order: yes, Jane did for him as well as she knew how, Miss Jimmy saw that.

"I wish my city friends could see me now!" she exclaimed. "They would think I was in luck, Cap'n Applegate, and so I am. Why, you step out like a young man!"

"I'm not so old as Jane Burrill would like to make out," the Captain replied, flourishing his stick. "She harps so it makes me tired to hear her. Not but what she means well. Did you like over to the city, Jimmy?"

"Yes, indeed I did! I had good friends,

and good patients, and enough of them; it's a great place, too. But it's good to get home, and feel that it's going to be home from now on. Seems as though I never looked out of a window there but I longed to see this, or something neighbor to it."

They had turned a corner, and were standing on the river-bank. On this side, below them, the willow copse was breaking into green mist above the swirling water: the opposite shore rose steeply, rough pasture land, with a bit of hanging wood half way up. The low sun shot broad arrows of gold through the black growth, fir and spruce, with here and there a soaring pine. Other arrows fell on the hither side, near where Miss Jimmy and the Captain stood, and turned the stem of a yellow birch to burnished copper, and flamed softly on a group of slender white birches, that stood like guardian nymphs at the entrance of an orchard.

"It seems wicked to spend your days

looking at a brick wall," said Miss Jimmy softly, "when you can see things like this."

"You going to live with Finey, Jimmy?"

"Yes, for the present I am, sir! Finey needs company; I'd like to take one or two boarders, if it's agreeable all round. I wish I could have you, Cap'n Applegate!"

"I wish't you could!" said the Captain ruefully.

"But we'll play together," she went on cheerily, "we will so. Why, I haven't had a game of back-gammon, I don't know when! And you'll come and take tea with me, and I'll have cheese cakes for you. Jane won't give you any pastry? The mean thing! Well, we won't have her, anyway. Who upon earth is this coming, Cap'n? He doesn't look like a Tupham person."

A man was coming towards them, with hasty steps that seemed to take little note of where or how they trod. A man in the later thirties, tall and slender, with fair hair

already thinning on his temples. His blue eyes were set far apart, and rather vague in their look. He was dressed in black, and he carried a cluster of slender rods, which seemed to be budding silver fur — pussy willows, in short. His hatband was stuck full of blossoms and leaves.

"That's Elder Lindsay!" said Captain Applegate. "You know him — Why, so you don't! He hasn't been here but three years. Good afternoon, Mr. Lindsay! a pleasant afternoon, sir! I wish to make you acquainted with Miss Jim —, I should say Miss Dolly. You've heard that she was coming back home to reside, I make no doubt."

Mr. Lindsay had an air of recalling his thoughts from some far distant region, but he saluted Miss Jimmy courteously, and said yes, oh yes, he had understood that Tupham was to have that privilege. A beautiful neighborhood, that of Tupham; yes —, quite so!

"Why, is *polygala* out?" said Miss Jimmy suddenly. Mr. Lindsay started and blushed violently as he looked down at his hat, which he still held in his hand.

"*Polygala!*" Miss Jimmy went on mischievously, "and *tiarella*, and — oh! lady's slipper!

"But I don't believe you know where to find the yellow ones. I think you and I will have to be friends, Mr. Lindsay."

"Oh — oh — quite so!" said the Rev. Charles Lindsay.

When Miss Jimmy left Captain Applegate at his own door, half an hour later, he said he felt ten years younger, and he certainly looked so. The tremulous uncertainty was gone from look and gait. He stepped firmly; he held up his head, and faced Miss Burrill, who stood wringing her hands in the doorway, with the look of a conqueror.

"Oh, Captain Applegate!" she lamented. "You will be completely prostrated by this

exertion. You have been using your limbs for over half an hour, sir!"

"Tut! tut! tut!" cried the Captain imperiously. "A turn on the quarter-deck, ma'am, a turn on the quarter-deck, nothing more. See about supper, ma'am, if you'll be so good! Good-bye, Jimmy! come again soon; any time, day or night, you'll be welcome!"

Smiling to herself, Miss Jimmy stepped briskly along the road, looking about her with quick, bird-like glances that took in every beauty of sky and hill, leaf and flower. The very dust beneath her feet was no common dust; with every step she recalled the feeling of it, hot and soft and smooth, under the little bare, brown feet that used to tread it. "It passes me," she muttered, "why people wear shoes in the country!"

She looked quickly round her; she was past the houses now, and no one was in sight. Down she went on the roadside grass; off came shoes and stockings, and

were rolled into a tidy bundle and tucked under her arm. With a sigh of relief and pleasure she went on, enjoying every step, turning now and then to see the clear, firm print of her little feet, and nodding in friendly commendation. "Pretty feet!" said Miss Jimmy; "I don't care if I do say it."

After a while, coming to the river bank, she looked about her till she spied a certain pine which leaned far out over the water, spreading thick layers of shade, and stretching twisted roots in every direction.

"Ah!" she said; "and how do you do, old friend? Is my armchair still there?"

Yes, her armchair was there; the nest of roots curling and coiling just over the edge of the bank, where a small figure might sit in comfort, dangling brown toes over the clear, swift stream. The pine-tree had no articulate words to welcome back his friend, but his soft murmur spoke plain enough. "Thank you, my dear!" said Miss Jimmy.

"I always said I would come back, you know!"

It was very still by the river. The sunset light lay on the water like a crimson robe flung down; along the bank other pines threw their deep shadow across the glory, and white lady birches leaned and looked and shook their green tresses. Miss Jimmy drew a long breath and looked about her. "I've come home!" she said. "I've come home to stay."

For some time she sat still, in content too deep for words or motion. The years slipped away, and she was little Jimmy Dolly, the friend of the dragon-fly and lucky-bug, the little sister of the river; there was nothing else in the world. By and by she looked round for a pebble, found one, and dropped it lightly into the water. A tiny crystal splash, and the circles spread and grew, wider and wider; little fish went darting hither and thither; a kingfisher which had been dozing on a withered branch

above her shot down like an arrow, seeking his meat.

The swift motions broke and turned the current of her thoughts; all in a moment they were back in the great city, where life was all motion, all swift hurry of pursuit, capture, escape. She saw the gray streets, alive with set, eager faces and hurrying feet; the houses swarming with life, gay and tragic, laughter and hate and tears. She saw the hospital; the faces on the pillows, pallid or fever-flushed, anxious or peaceful; the nurses with their cheerful faces and swift, tranquil motions; the surgeons, alert and tense, with muscles of steel and nerves of iron. A ripple passed over her; her own muscles seemed to stiffen, and her chin lifted to attention. After all, could she live without it all? A few months — possibly a few years — but to stay always in this still place, drifting round and round in the eddy while the stream outside was rushing by,— could she do it? Her

quick blood rebelled; her quick mind, like the wild creatures she watched, darted hither and thither, seeking a way out; it was the moment of trial. She sat rigid, alert, waiting — for what?

A little breeze came loitering up the river and whispered to the great pine-tree; he began to murmur softly: "Hush! hush! oh, hush! rest is good!" the breeze touched the river, and ripples woke, and plashed lightly on the pebbles below her feet; "Hush! oh, hush! rest, oh, rest!"

Miss Jimmy listened, and other voices seemed to mingle with the murmur and the ripple; the good old man's, tremulous with affection and anxiety: "You've come home to stay, Jimmy?"

Mrs. Shute's, comfortable and hearty, yet with an under note of feeling in it: "I'm glad you've come home; we need a new start!" Clearer than any other, the soft, sweet, lazy drawl whose every note was played on her very heart strings; Finey's

voice: "I've needed you, sister; I don't seem to be able to keep well when you aren't here."

Miss Jimmy rose to her feet with a spring; shook the pine-needles from her dress, and spoke in crisp tones. "Look here, Jimmy Dolly! There's no occasion for heroics, that I see. I'll just trouble you to answer a question or two. Can you take care of more than one ward at a time? No, you can't! Did you ever see a ward with a thousand people in it before? No, you didn't! Well, then, what are you talking about, I should like to know? Suppose you shut up, and go home!"

And she did.

CHAPTER IV

THE BOARDER

"YES, I thought he was a widower!" said Miss Jimmy. "He has that mildewed appearance that some of 'em get when they need a change. Come from Cyrus, you say?"

"Three years ago, he came!" said Mrs. Royal reflectively. "I remember because we had him to tea, and we had the best ham I ever tasted of. It was Mis' Shute's pig, and 'twas younger than she usually killed, but the children hove some glass into the pen, and she was afraid he would get hurt eating it, and so she killed him. 'Twas a remarkable ham, but Mr. Lindsay never noticed; it might have been hash for all he knew. Yes, they claim he is real spiritual, and has a gift in prayer, but good

food is thrown away on him, that is all I say."

Miss Jimmy wondered if it would be now. That was when his grief was new to him, she supposed, and many people could not eat in grief.

"That may be so!" said Mrs. Royal; "but with me it is the reverse; when I am low in my mind there's nothing like something tasty to set my spirits up. Food stops sorrow, in my opinion, the way nothing else does. I feel as if I could relish a mite of that pound cake, sister, if it's handy by."

"Finey!" said Jimmy when she had brought the cake, "I've been thinking!"

"Yes, sister!" Mrs. Royal looked up with large soft eyes, chewing her cake as if it were a cud. "You mostly are thinking, aren't you?"

"I'd like to take one or two boarders. There! now the murder is out. You see, honey," she went on; and stationing herself

behind her sister's chair she began to rub her massive shoulders with light, practiced touch; "you see, I have to run in and out, and do a hand's turn for this one and that, and here you sit alone, and you don't like it, and no reason why you should. But I was thinking, if we had one or two pleasant folks in the house, 'twould be agreeable all round, and you and I would be earning something. What say?"

Mrs. Royal chewed her cud. "I don't know but it might be agreeable," she said presently, "if they were agreeable folks — I don't know what Mr. Royal would say to it."

"I'll ask him!" said Jimmy brightly.

She did ask him, over a glass of orange phosphate, in the shop. "What I look at," she said, "is the benefit all round. First, there is the board money, and then there is more to interest Sylphine, and I feeling freer to visit and tend out on those who need me. Don't you see, Earl?"

"It would make a disturbance in the home, Jemina!" said Mr. Royal.

"Just what Sylphine needs."

"H'm! maybe so! and the board money —"

"You'd get the board money!" said Miss Jimmy promptly.

"Just so! Well, Jemina, the plan appears to me a good one, if you can find congenial persons; congenial persons. I should want for them to be refined in their manners, and — agreeable in their appearance."

"I have just the article in my mind!" said Miss Jimmy.

Things always did fall her way, she reflected. Only that afternoon had she heard that Mr. Lindsay was looking for a room, his landlady having given him notice that she had decided to spend the winter with her daughter in the west. Mr. Lindsay was just the person she wanted; now if she only had a nice young girl to liven things up a bit —

She wrote a note that night, to the Rev. Charles Lindsay, favor of Bennie Toothaker, who would take it in the morning when he brought the milk.

Before noon next day Mr. Lindsay had replied with a note of grateful acceptance.

This was Tuesday, and on Wednesday Miss Jimmy did some lively stepping, as she expressed it. Fresh curtains in the spare room; every rug beaten, every pillow shaken, flowers in all the vases, fresh cookies and pound cake in the yellow crocks, apple and mince and cranberry pies on the shelves — small wonder that by tea-time on Wednesday evening the little terrier dropped down on her stool at her sister's feet and declared that there was no breath left in her body.

"I shouldn't think there would be!" said Mrs. Royal, "I know I am wore out just seeing you fly round, sister. Why, your shoes must be worn to holes this one day!"

"They are!" And Miss Jimmy put out a neat little slipper with an undeniable round hole in either side.

"Just look, Finey! do you remember old Mr. Patten's carpet slippers? I wish I had them on this minute."

Mr. Royal looked at her over the top of the *Druggist's Weekly,* with a disapproving glance. "I mistrust that you are making a mistake, after all, Jemina!" he said reprovingly. "If you are going to be tired out before he comes, how will you manage when he is here? I would recommend you taking a Panaceal Pill before each meal, and before retiring, for the next week."

"Panaceal Poppy"— began Miss Jimmy from her seat on the stool; but next minute she rose with a spring, blushing like a girl!

"Why! Mr. Lindsay!" she cried. "Good evening! Step right in, won't you?"

Mr. Lindsay was blushing too. He earnestly hoped he had not come too soon.

He understood — in fact — Mrs. Shute was positive that —

Miss Jimmy reassured him. "We were just waiting 'till you came!" she said. "Weren't we, Sister?"

Finey assented with an amiable murmur, and Mr. Royal extended a solemn hand of welcome.

"We consider it a privilege," he said, "to receive our pastor under our humble roof. It is our prayer, sir, that your sojourn may be sanctified to us all."

"Oh — oh, quite so!" stammered Mr. Lindsay. "Very much so indeed! I trust your health is improving, Mrs. Royal?"

"I'm going to show you your room right now!" said Miss Jimmy. "George bringing your trunk over? Why, here he is this minute; if that isn't a fit, now! and you can be settling in while I'm getting supper on."

She led the way upstairs, and opened the door of the south bedroom. It had been

her mother's, and she had been glad in her heart that the Royals had preferred another chamber.

She hoped the minister was good enough to occupy it; no one else was, surely. She glanced round it with appreciative pride; at the snowy dimity with its ball and tassel fringe, at the neat writing table, at the toilet set of "flowed blue"; then she looked at the minister.

Apparently he saw none of these things; his gaze was fixed intently on a small vase that stood on the narrow mantel shelf.

"*Cypripedium arietinum!*" he cried. "Is it possible?"

Miss Jimmy smiled demurely.

"Ram's-head, we call it!" she said.

"Does it — have you — I never have seen it in this neighborhood!" exclaimed Mr. Lindsay; and he hung over the flower like a lover.

"I found the place when I was ten years old!" said Miss Jimmy. "I've never

shown it to anybody, but maybe I will to you some day. Supper'll be ready in fifteen minutes, sir."

She told Mrs. Shute the next morning that the whole day's work was nothing compared to that supper.

Finey was right; creamed chicken, feathery rolls and damson jam seemed to mean nothing to Mr. Lindsay; he ate, but it was Miss Jimmy's belief that what really nourished him was ram's-head lady's-slipper.

Sylphine saw this and became plaintive; the non-appreciation of good food afflicted her like a wound.

Earl Royal blinked more than usual, and suited his remarks laboriously to the office of his guest. The use of figs as a poultice, now; had it been general among the Hebrews, did Mr. Lindsay think? And as the minister met his blinking eyes with a blank stare, he hastened to add, "Isaiah 38:21, you know, sir; a lump of figs, and lay for a plaster upon the boil, and he should recover."

"I thought he was going crazy!" said Miss Jimmy, "and so did Finey, I believe. As for Mr. Lindsay, when he got his wits whistled back from wherever they were, he just said that was the only case he knew of, but they seem to have cured King Hezekiah. He knew the fig was one of the most wholesome of fruits.

"Then Earl Royal just launched out and spread himself. 'I often prescribe figs in this way,' he said, 'finding the Scripture fulfilled in the case of boils and even carbuncles;' and said figs were used in confection of senna — well, of course I knew that — and he made a emulcent of them for throat trouble, and so forth and so on. Why, Mrs. Shute, he poured out of a pitcher so to speak; and Finey drank it all in — there! I thought I should spread my wings and fly, for sure!"

Mrs. Shute chuckled, "So long as you don't fly away, Jimmy, I'm content."

"Well; I can tell better a week from

now how 'twill all work out. Now I must go, or Cap'n won't get his game of back-gammon."

CHAPTER V

MR. LINDSAY'S WAY

WHEN we heard that Mr. Lindsay was actually settled at Miss Jimmy's (somehow it became Miss Jimmy's again as soon as she came back), we all drew a long breath of relief. We had been uneasy about Elder Lindsay. There was no doubt he had a gift, both in preaching and praying; it was a privilege to sit under him, we realized that; but as a pastor, he certainly did leave something to be desired. It was not only that he forgot our names; that was perhaps natural for a scholar, though it was a little dashing to the spirits when he had taken tea with us the very night before; it was not only that he had recently brought a botanical essay to meeting instead of his sermon and had got as far as —"In taking up the study of the

flora of our native woodlands, the mind is amazed "—before Deacon Shute pulled his coat-tails, and whispered in his ear; and after all — after the first bewildered moment — such an *extempore* address as he gave! — we knew we ought to be thankful for it, and we were; but there were other things. When you met him on the street, and he took off his hat in that sweet, gentle way of his,— well, you never knew what might be in it; once it was birds' eggs, and they broke and — honestly, it took Mrs. Bantam all the next day to get his coat clean, though all he thought about was the eggs, some kind that were scarce; or it might be ferns, or butterflies, or any kind of truck; and once, as true as Sarah Kitten stood there, it was a bat, and flew right in her face, and she had palpitations for a week after.

But now, we felt, all would be well. Our faith in Miss Jimmy was unlimited; we knew she would " manage."

The very second evening after his arrival,

her plan of action was laid down. Captain Applegate and Jane Burrill were there to tea, and Jane told us about it. They drew up to supper — a lovely supper Jane said it was, cheese snoofly (Jane *would* call it "snoofly") and French fried, and the best veal loaf she had ever soon — and Elder Lindsay said grace so kind of sweet and holy, Jane felt as if it was shew bread (she pronounced it "shoe") they were called to partake of; and down they sat and to they fell. The evening was warm, and Elder Lindsay was wishful to use his handkerchief; he puts his hand in his pocket, and out he takes a bunch of moss and like that; never looks at it, but wipes his forehead with it. 'Twas wet, and the drops run down into his eyes; he looks up kind of startled, and the same minute Finey looks up and sees him with his face all streaked with mud. She screeched right out, and he saw what he had done, and colored all over like a girl; then he hastened to feel in another pocket, and might

Jane never hope to be forgiven if a little green snake didn't run right across the table, and into Jimmy's lap! Jane screeched out too, then, and everybody jumped up except Jimmy; she just threw her napkin over the thing and took it up as composed as if it was a doughnut.

"And what happened then?" we asked breathless.

"Jimmy is a case!" said Jane, "she says as quiet as I sit here,— 'I'm going to bring in some hot rolls; these aren't real hot. Mr. Lindsay, I wonder if you would help me with the oven door; there's a catch to it that takes a man sometimes!' Just that way, passing over Earl Royal as if he wasn't there. She got the man out, and had him all cleaned up and back again in his seat before I for one had got my breath after that nasty creature. She certainly is a case!"

Mr. Lindsay may have thought so too, during that brief moment in the kitchen when he woke from his distressful bewilder-

ment to find his face being washed, quickly and skilfully, while a quiet voice asked if he had any other live things about him. He had not, and could only murmur incoherent apologies and thanks; but when Miss Jimmy went to bed that night she found the minister standing at his door, waiting for her.

"Miss Dolly," he said sadly, "I must once more ask you to forgive me for — for the untoward occurrence of this evening. It was, I am aware, a most unfortunate beginning for me to make; I can only assure you, and beg you to assure Mr. and Mrs. Royal, that I shall make every endeavor — that — that it shall *not* occur again."

"Don't give it another thought, Mr. Lindsay!" said Miss Jimmy cheerfully. "I've got it all planned out. I've got a covered crock, and I'm going to stand it right in the porch, handy when you come in; you can empty your pockets right into that, and clap the cover on, and everything will be safe then

till such time as you want it. How is that?"

Elder Lindsay's face lighted with a lovely look.

"How good you are!" he said. "You see, Miss Dolly, Rose Ellen — my wife —" his voice faltered — "always kept me — kept me straight, if you understand. She was — she was everything that I am not. I am not fitted for practical life, to my shame be it said; but Rose Ellen — Rose Ellen —"

Very gently Miss Jimmy reassured him. She had heard what a fine woman Mrs. Lindsay was. She understood how great the sorrow had been; he must try to feel that he was with friends now, friends who would try their best to make him comfortable. "And who care for some of the same things!" she added cheerily. "I know where you found that moss; there is only one place where it grows around here. Now, good night, sir; and if I might advise you"— for over his shoulder she saw the

lighted lamp, and the table littered with foolscap,— "if I might advise you, I'd preach a sermon to your pillow, and not write any more now. Sleep well, sir!"

But in her own spotless room, brushing out her thick brown hair (with the pretty ripple in it that we all liked so), Miss Jimmy looked grave, and shook her head several times. Finey had been really upset by the snake; she could not have Finey upset. She must try to be on hand when he came in, so as to see that he did empty his pockets. Let her see! it was four years since his wife died, Mrs. Shute said. If he was ever going to get used to it, he would have by this time. It only showed — Miss Jimmy did not say what it showed, but before she slept, every spinster in the village between the ages of twenty and forty had passed before her mind's eye, and the nurse's instinct had weighed and appraised each one at her exact value. Just before she dropped off, she said to her pillow, "Persis Shute!"

Mrs. Royal was poorly next morning, and Mr. Royal blinked sourly over his sausage. He could not say anything, for Miss Jimmy kept up a steady stream of cheery babble, and fairly babbled him out of the house and Mr. Lindsay up to his room. Having got rid of them the little terrier plumped down on her knees by her sister's bed and announced that she was going to rub the Law and the Prophets into her.

"Once get the men folks out of the way," she said gleefully, "and we can get on first rate. Not but what they have their use!"

"I'm sure, sister, 'twas your part getting Mr. Lindsay here!" whimpered Sylphine. "Mr. Royal says he don't know what you were thinking of; the man isn't in his senses, he says, and he thinks 'twill be a long time before I get over the shock. Ugh! that awful thing! it ran so fast—"

"There's Sarah Kitten!" Miss Jimmy, from her station by the bedside, commanded a view of the road. "Why do you s'pose

she crabs along sideways like that? She always did from a child. Your skin is just like velvet, Finey; I used often to think of you, when I was rubbing a lady out Roxbury way. She was all over knobs like a poison bottle; I used to wish it was you instead, dearie! does that seem to reach the pain?"

Mrs. Royal murmured a drowsy assent, and presently added.

"Sarah Kitten says that liniment you gave her is equally as good inside as out; she took half a tumbler of it, and it seemed to bring her spirits right up, she said."

"I guess it did! there's enough alcohol in that liniment to set the sexton dancing. If that isn't just like Sarah Kitten! Remember when she was a little slice, and went tasting round the pantry, and got hold of the rat-poison? She didn't only just taste it, but she was a terrible sick child. Now there's my beauty girl all smoothed out, and now we'll have on our pink sacque, and I'll

bring your breakfast in half a shake of a cat's tail. I've got a surprise for you!"

So that time was tided over, and Miss Jimmy devoutly hoped it was forgotten; but several days later Earl Royal came in looking more solemn than usual, and pulled a bottle out of his pocket.

"Jemina," he said slowly, "Sylphine is failing up. I said it before, and I say it again. She needs something special for her case, and I believe I have found it." He held up the bottle, a large and portly one. "Barnard's Bovine Beverage!" he said; "highly recommended by the *Druggist's Weekly,* and thousands of bottles sold. Palatable, nourishing, and enriching to the blood. I wish Sylphine to take a great spoonful of this before and after meals, Jemina. Will you attend to it?"

"I will!" said Miss Jimmy brightly, and held out her hand for the bottle. "I'll see to it, Earl!"

And she did; she told Mrs. Shute about

it afterward. "I took grape jelly and put water to it till I got just the right color, matching it by the bottle; then I hove the stuff away and filled it with my mixture, adding a mite of capsicum. It makes a lovely tonic, Mrs. Shute. Finey counts the hours till she gets it. I believe I'll make up a bottle for Persis!"

Mrs. Shute smiled and sighed, "Jimmy, if you aren't a case!" she said.

CHAPTER VI

CHECKERBERRY PASTURE

ONE morning in early May, Persis Shute was sitting on the back doorstep, peeling potatoes. It was a wonderful morning, clear and warm, with no tang in the air. The robins were singing, the sparrows chattering, the wayside ferns unrolling their green bundles; everything in nature rejoiced,—except Persis Shute. She was frowning over her potatoes, and the corners of her pretty mouth drooped disdainfully. Hearing the sound of wheels she looked up, and was aware of Miss Jimmy, in Sam Shute's buggy, with Sam's old white horse. A straw hat was tied firmly under her chin, and her air was one of high festivity.

"There you are, Persis!" she said. "Just the girl I want!"

"Good morning, Miss Jimmy," said the girl with her ungracious air. "Are you coming in, or shall I call mother?"

"Neither one!" Miss Jimmy spoke with cheerful decision. "This is our day, Persis, yours and mine, just made for us; and we are going to Checkerberry Pasture. Jump right in! I told you I should come for you, don't you remember?"

Persis demurred; she had some sewing to do, she said, and mother would want some help with dinner; but it was of no use. When Miss Jimmy had her mind made up, as Mrs. Shute said, there you were! and in five minutes the white horse started off again with a double load.

"I said to myself,—" Miss Jimmy shook the reins with a cheerful cluck,—"the minute I looked out of the window this morning, 'This is our day!' I said; and sure enough, so it turned out. We couldn't go to-morrow, Mr. Royal is going away, to be gone two or three days; and by next week

the May-flowers will be gone, the best of them. Too, Mr. Lindsay had asked if he could have some luncheon, as he planned to take a long walk; everything fitted in like bones in a shad. I got the two baskets ready together, his and ours, and I got Sylphine all dressed up as pretty as a peach, and Ellen Foster's coming to dinner with her — Ellen is cheerful, and has a good deal to say, and she is going to bring a new crochet stitch to show sister,— and so here we are, Persis, and I say let's enjoy ourselves! I remember well what good times we used to have when you were a little dot and I a big girl; don't you?"

"You're real kind, Miss Jimmy!" said Persis reluctantly; "but — it's a pity you didn't take someone that was a more enjoyable kind than I am. I'm not in spirits to enjoy anything, I'm afraid."

"You never can tell what you are going to enjoy and what you aren't; that's my experience!" Miss Jimmy replied. "I had a

patient once,—" and she launched into a long recital of a "case," looking about her the while with her bird-like glances, missing no single gleam of wayside brook, no hint of cowslip startling in the meadow or violet purpling the bank. The quick glances took in her companion, too, drooping and brooding beside her, her dark eyes half shut, seeing nothing of the lovely pomp. It seemed unlikely that she heard anything of what Miss Jimmy was saying, but you never could tell.

"And in six weeks' time from his taking the carving-knife to himself, he was counting the hours between meals, and telling me what kind of car he was going to buy. At last one morning he said, 'Miss Dolly, I feel so well this morning, I think I'll put on my corsets!'"

"His *what?*" Persis looked up, a gleam in her dark eyes.

"Precisely what I said! 'Your *what*, Mr. Greengrass?' I said: 'My corsets!'

he said. 'They are in the second drawer from the top, right hand corner.' Just like that! I looked at him. 'Mr. Greengrass' I said, 'if you are well enough to put on your corsets, you are well enough to get them for yourself.' I left the next morning."

"The idea!" said Persis.

"Well, that's what I thought. I'll take care of a man or a woman, whichever needs me, but it has to be one or the other. Here we are at Flagstaff; oh, I *am* glad we came!"

An abandoned schoolhouse stood at the meeting of two cross roads. The flagstaff which had given it its name a generation ago drooped disconsolately in front of its battered doors and gaping window-frames. Around it the forest was creeping up, slowly and steadily, the young pines and firs pressing forward like eager scholars; the ancient hemlock beside it might have been the master who had seen the fickle generation of men come and go, and who now beckoned

his green-clad pupils to take their own again.

Tying the horse to the fence, Miss Jimmy took from the wagon a substantial basket; the two clambered over the fence, and made their way through a tangle of birch and alder, which fell suddenly away, showing a stretch of open pasture. Russet grass in tussocks and hummocks, the green moss showing the dry growth; gray boulders covered with flat, rippling, gray-green lichens; here and there juniper bushes spreading their green elastic cushions; and all around the open space a fringe of trees, pine and birch intermingled, all bending forward as if to count and guard the treasure of the pasture.

Checkerberries and May-flowers; May-flowers and checkerberries! never were such blossoms seen, Miss Jimmy declared; nowhere else in the State of Maine could such be found. You had but to put aside a tuft of dry grass; there you would find a mat of dry, green-brown leaves, and under them

again,— oh! the miracle of rosy white, the ecstasy of fragrance! And nodding over and beside and all about them, the checkerberries; not the little round half-shrivelled objects which city-dwellers associate with a gill measure and an apple-stand, but oval berries of a wonderful carmine tint, full and rich and tempting; only those who have found the Flagstaff Pasture know what checkerberries can be.

Miss Jimmy plumped down beside a flat rock, and looked about her delightedly. "I *am* glad we came!" she repeated. "Here, Persis! come just over here against me; see them peeping yonder? Oh, you pretties! Look, Persis! did you ever? This grass is for all the world like Sarah Kitten's hair, isn't it? You'd expect to see her face popping up under it."

Persis Shute laughed unwillingly. "So it is!" she said! "Poor Miss Kitten!"

"Indeed and truly you may say so!" Miss Jimmy responded. "Poor Sarah Kit-

ten! look what she has made of herself!"

"Made of herself?" said Persis vaguely; "mother says she was always odd; I don't suppose she would have made herself that way, if she had had the say."

"I want you just to look at this bunch! There are thirty blossoms on it if there's one! and the color! It's just the color you used to have, Persis, and ought to have this day. Yes, Sarah *was* odd, but she needn't have let herself get so odd as she is now. Sarah was — well, not to say pretty, but yet not homely. Her hair was always this color, like sunburnt grass, but she did it up nicely, and now and then she'd fluff it up a little, and have a pretty ribbon, and like that; she was more like other girls, only for the way she crabbed along, and kept her head down on one side; that was in her make-up from the beginning, I expect. Take her altogether, you wouldn't notice Sarah specially one way or the other, except for the crabbing; but she had a disappointment — or so 'twas

thought — and she just let herself go all abroad; never took any pains with herself afterwards; got slimpsy and slumpsy, and — well, just that — let herself go! too bad! oh-ee! here's the prize bunch of berries! one-two — seven on this one stem, if you'll believe me!"

Never looking at the girl on the other side of the flat rock, Miss Jimmy was yet aware that she was sitting very straight, and that there was a flame in her eyes and two more in her cheeks. Now she spoke, in a constrained tone. "Did he — go away?"

"No! he just took to going with someone else, and then he got married. Some claimed he never gave Sarah any cause to feel the way she did, and others thought he hadn't showed a nice feeling. I don't know how that was,— I wasn't acquainted with him — but what I always thought was, it was such a pity for her to let folks know how she felt. There needn't a soul have known anything about it if she'd behaved

a little different. My stars! she wasn't the only girl —"

Miss Jimmy broke off abruptly, and reached for her basket. "I say," she announced, "we eat our dinner now, before we begin to pick in good earnest. That will be just so much less time they have to pine, poor pretties, before we get them in water. It does seem a shame to pick them; I wouldn't, if 'tweren't for sister and the others who can't get round to seeing them grow."

Chattering cheerily, Miss Jimmy made a fair division of sandwiches and cookies, and fell to with good appetite. Persis Shute took her share, and sat with it in her lap, looking gloomily before her. Presently — "How could she help it?" she asked. "If folks choose to pry and ferret and nose into other folks' business, what are you going to do about it? She couldn't keep laughing all the time when she — when there was no laugh left in her!"

"Maybe not!" said Miss Jimmy; "but she could put some laugh into other people."

"I don't see how!" said Persis sullenly.

"My stars!" Miss Jimmy sat up straight, sandwich in hand. "Do you think,— does a girl think that the world has stopped going round, just because her cake is slack-baked? (this is, and I'm sorry!) tell her to help other folks with their cake! show them a smiling face; give them a pleasant word; *do something* — I'd say to any such girl I knew — for somebody else! If you can't smile for them, wash dishes for them, darn stockings for them; there are ways enough, thank the Lord, to make other people laugh. And probably," she added, "they have had more trouble than ever you had or will have, — I'd say to her."

Persis Shute made no reply, but began to eat her sandwich, taking slow, revengeful bites, as if she owed the ham and chicken a grudge. Suddenly Miss Jimmy looked up, and uttered an exclamation. "I do de-

clare!" she said. "If there isn't Mr. Lindsay!"

She shot a swift glance at her companion. "What do you say, Persis?" she spoke under her breath. "I expect we shall have to ask him to come and sit down with us. Like as not he has lost his luncheon, and anyway "— Hi! Mr. Lindsay!" she called, waving her handkerchief; "here's two of your flock over here!"

Charles Lindsay came out of the wood with alert step and shining eyes.

He was bareheaded, and a fern or two and a spray of ground pine were stuck in his hair, apparently for safe keeping. His hair was light, and waved from his forehead in what some of us thought an apostolic way. He looked an eager boy now, as he stepped lightly forward, hat in hand, following a yellow butterfly. The butterfly was newly awake, perhaps; it flew slowly, pausing and wavering, as if uncertain of the new wings; another moment, and it would be his; the hat

was actually over the fluttering creature — and was withdrawn. Charles Lindsay stopped, and passed his hand across his forehead. "Brother Butterfly," he said, "I am ashamed! I ask your pardon, Brother Butterfly; accept my apology, sir!"

He made a little gesture of farewell, as the butterfly flew away; and at this moment he caught sight of Miss Jimmy, and heard her cheery greeting.

"Come over here, Mr. Lindsay! it's just luncheon time."

Mr. Lindsay blushed, and looked confusedly about him; then slowly drew near the two sitting by the great flat stone. The eager boy-look vanished, giving place to one half guilty, half deprecating; and he stole a glance at the young girl which she might well have resented had she seen it; but she did not see it. She was picking checkerberries.

"Where is your basket, sir?" asked Miss

Jimmy. She wanted to add, "and your hat, and your wits?" but she refrained.

The minister looked about him vaguely.

"Basket?" he repeated. "This tin case, Miss Dolly, usually serves to hold my specimens; I —"

"Man alive! your luncheon basket! I gave you one this morning, don't you remember?"

"— I —" faltered Mr. Lindsay; "I fear, Miss Dolly —"

"You've lost it? Well, I presumed likely — that is, I thought possibly you might, sir; it's no matter; I brought enough for four, let alone three."

"I am *very* sorry!" said Mr. Lindsay. "I am truly chagrined. I — the habit of eating is one which I am too apt to forget. I trust you will pardon me, Miss Dolly. Was the basket a valuable one? I may be able to recover it."

"I gave you an old one o' purpose!" twinkled Miss Dolly. "Here! we've taken

this flat stone for a table; now if this isn't pleasant! You know this young lady, I presume? of course, she's one of your flock."

Mr. Lindsay and Persis bowed, he vaguely, she sullenly; but neither seemed to have anything to say to the other. Miss Jimmy, suppressing with difficulty a desire to shake them both, went on gayly; "Here's ham sandwiches, and here's chicken; have you any choice, sir? Haven't? then here's one of each to try! and here's hard-boiled eggs, and doughnuts, and cookies, and apple pie. I hope you can make out, sir!"

Mr. Lindsay murmured incoherent praise of everything. He put his hand in his pocket, apparently seeking his handkerchief, but drew it out again with a frightened glance at Persis. There were brown stains on his slender fingers.

"Have a paper napkin!" said Miss Jimmy promptly. "Aren't they a convenience? And when he has had his luncheon,

Persis, maybe Mr. Lindsay will show us what he has in his tin box."

It was an unfortunate remark. Mr. Lindsay's face lit up happily; he dropped his sandwich and reaching over his shoulder, proceeded to unstrap the tin box with eager fingers. "I have found saxifrage," he said, "and *lycopodium lubidulum,* and anemone — it is very early for anemone — and hepatica in bud; and here are some highly interesting sphagni, which I am unable to name at this moment, but which I shall be most happy to show you. I do not know, ladies, whether you have gone deeply into the study of our native sphagni, but I assure you that few classes of plants better repay the student for any amount of toil bestowed on them. Here we have, you observe,—"

Half an hour later, Miss Jimmy rose to her feet, and shook the crumbs from her lap with a decided little gesture. "That's just as interesting as it can be, Mr. Lindsay,"

she said, "and when you have looked them up, as you say, you can tell us the rest. But now I'm going to begin my picking; I want to gather quite a quantity, you see, for various friends; and, Mr. Lindsay, I want you to finish our luncheon; why, you have hardly eaten a morsel, sir, and all from telling us all that about the sphagni; I am sure we are a thousand times obliged to you, aren't we, Persis? Now I look to you to make an end of that pie; there's no more than one portion to it — man's portion, that is; Persis, you see that he does it! and then you might begin right here, the two of you together. I know a spot just a little way off — I'll be back directly —"

She drifted away quietly, talking as she went, first to her companions, then, when sure that her voice could no longer reach them, to herself. "There's no *better* place than just where you are, no larger blooms, nor yet more plenty; but when I was a little girl I used always to seek out this partic-

ular spot, and I never told anybody —"

She glanced back over the top of a juniper bush. Mr. Lindsay was eating his pie dutifully, in fugitive, apologetic bites; Persis sat with her chin in her hand, staring moodily before her, apparently unconscious of his presence.

"I never," Miss Jimmy went on, "in my whole life, wanted to do anything so much as I do to shake that girl!"

CHAPTER VII

NURSING AND CARPENTRY

PERSIS SHUTE had a good power of obstinacy. She had stood out against all of us these two years, refusing to dance to any piping we could compass; but she could not stand against Miss Jimmy. The first parallel was laid in Checkerberry Pasture, that May morning; the second followed a day or two after. Susan Quin's baby was taken very ill, and Miss Jimmy was sent for, and came flying. The mother was still feeble — the baby was only a month old,— and Miss Jimmy had been seeing to her morning and evening. Baby had slept most of the time, and things had gone well enough, but now they were going badly, and help was needed.

Miss Jimmy, with the wailing child in her arms, came to the door and looked up and down the street. The only person in sight was Persis Shute, walking slowly along, swinging her hat by its broad ribbon, her handsome face brooding and sullen as usual, her eyes fixed on the ground.

"There!" said Miss Jimmy. "And then tell me the Lord doesn't take an interest! Here, Persis, see here a minute, will you?"

The girl looked up, and smiled as if in spite of herself. She had a sweet smile, but we had almost forgotten it. She quickened her pace, and soon reached the house. "The fire is low," said Miss Jimmy. "Just brisk it up a bit, will you, Persis? And fill the kettle; I want some good hot water."

The girl looked at her in amazement. "I — I was going to the postoffice!" she said.

"The postoffice isn't going to run away," Miss Jimmy reassured her; "'twill stay right there. You are going to help me now, Persis, because help is needed."

She turned back into the house, and Persis followed her in silence. "Here's Persis Shute come to help us!" she announced cheerfully, looking in at the bedroom door. "Now we shall get along first rate. What's the matter now, Susan?"

Mrs. Quin was crying. She was a tender, anxious little creature, full of forebodings at the best of times. "Oh, Miss Jimmy!" she said. "I'm afraid Baby's dreadful sick. It doesn't seem as if I *could* lay here and see him suffer. I wish't you'd let me get up."

"You aren't going to see him suffer! First place, he isn't suffering — are you, darling? See him cuddle down on my shoulder; isn't he a kitten? Second place, I'm going to take him into the kitchen where it's warm. Now, Susan Quin, if you are going to give this baby mournful milk, I'll give you something to be mournful about, see if I don't! Got that water on, Persis? Good girl! Now you come and

hold Baby a minute, while I get her some nourishment. Here!"

Miss Jimmy told Mrs. Shute afterward that to see Persis handle that baby was a caution.

"It was as if she was hungry, and didn't know what ailed her. She looked at him a minute, and then she seemed to break right up into smiling and crying; and she cuddled down to him, and he up to her, and she didn't know there was anything else in the wide world. She'll come round all right, Mrs. Shute, see if she doesn't!"

"I hope so, I'm sure!" sighed Mrs. Shute. "I've been clean discouraged lately, Jimmy, now I tell you."

"Give a person time, and work," said Miss Jimmy, "and they'll come round from anything. That's my experience."

"'Tis strange, too!" Mrs. Shute said thoughtfully. "She hasn't seemed to care to take hold with Sam's children, nor yet with Myra's. Myra and Lottie have been

rather down on Persis; they say I've spoiled her, but I don't know. A person wants their children to be happy. Why, Jimmy, it's a year and more — I don't know but it's two years,— since I've heard Persis speak as cheerful as she did last night. I am more than thankful to you!"

"She needed a new hand, that's all!" said Miss Jimmy. "It's like turning a carpet round, if you understand what I mean. And too, most probably she was tired of grieving, inside of all, and didn't know it. You can't grieve more than about so long; it isn't nature."

The Quin baby got well; Miss Jimmy's babies usually did get well. Susan Quin herself got up on her feet in a feeble fashion. She would need help for a while, Miss Jimmy announced, and Persis was to give it to her. "I've got my hands full!" she said. "Emily Ricketts has got the shingles on her back, and Earl Royal is going to have shingles on the roof, and between

one thing and another I am about ready to fly. So I look to you, Persis, to see to the Quins. They are the kind that has to be seen to, and will as long as they live."

Miss Jimmy's hands were to be fuller before long. Earl Royal had not chosen a fortunate time for shingling the roof. Sylphine was going through a "spell," and Mr. Lindsay had an address to prepare for Quarterly Meeting; but the shingles were a bargain, bought from an East Tupham man whose house had burned down just after he had got them; moreover, when Earl wanted to do a thing, he wanted to do it, and that was all there was to it, as Miss Jimmy said. But this was not all. Earl must do all the shingling himself; he could not afford to hire, he said; when Miss Jimmy offered to pay a man, he was of opinion that he shingled to suit himself, besides preferring not to be beholden; to put it in one word, he was cantankerous. Miss Jimmy called it "odd." Another of his oddities or cantan-

kerosities was that the "druggist's wrist," as he called it, allowed him to work only in short periods. These he took in his spare hours in the early morning, when poor Finey was used to a delicious nap after Sister had brought her coffee; at noon, when she was apt to be drowsy after a substantial dinner; and again after supper, the time of all others for doorstep calls or "run-ins" on soft spring evenings.

"I *shall* fly!" said Miss Jimmy. "I certainly shall. No need of aeroplanes in *my* case! Just put me on that roof —" she stopped, and her eyes began to twinkle. She looked at her sister. "Are you feeling pretty smart this afternoon, honey?" she asked.

Mrs. Royal was feeling some better; not to say well, but yet —

"Then I'll tell you! I'm going up on that roof this moment, and do a piece on those shingles before Earl comes back."

"Oh, sister! I don't believe you'd bet-

ter!" said Finey. "You know how set he is about his shingles; he might not like it. Besides, I thought you were going to set with me a spell. You were out all the morning, and I want to know how Etta Sawin is getting on."

"We'll have a game!" said Miss Jimmy. "Remember how we used to play tunes with the apple-butter paddle, and each one try to guess what the other was playing? Well! I'll hammer tunes, and you guess 'em, and tell me what they are when you come down. Don't say a word! I'm off this minute."

And off she was, and next moment was whisking up the ladder like a squirrel, hammer in hand.

> "*Rat,* tat tat,
> Rat-a-tat tat tat *tat!*"

The Soldiers' Chorus from "Faust" has been played on every instrument known to man; but probably never before was it played with a hammer on shingle nails.

Merrily it rattled out on the quiet evening air. As she hammered, the marching rhythm brought back to Miss Jimmy the last time she had heard it; the wide street, the blue-clad soldiers marching steadily, the crowd running and shouting, the flags waving overhead, the gay, devil-may-care melody crashing and blaring from trumpet and kettledrum.

"Ta rat tat tat *tat,*
Ta rat tat tat *tat,*
Ta *rat* tat tat *tat!*"

"My!" said Miss Jimmy. "I'd like to hear a band play."

She was on her fourth course when she heard from below the sound for which her ears had been pricked ever since she began.

"Jemima!"

Earl Royal's voice was amazed, reproachful, indignant.

"What are you doing, Jemima?"

"Why, I'm shingling, Earl!" Miss

Jimmy, removing the nails from her mouth, turned a cheerful face downward. "You didn't know I took a prize for shingling when I was a girl, did you? Go on in and see Finey, and ask her what tune I'm playing, will you?"

Mr. Royal's further remarks — he seemed to be making some — were drowned in the lively clatter of the hammer. Miss Jimmy was bound to finish her four courses, the stint she had set herself, no matter what happened. "He can't pull me off the roof!" she said gleefully. "I expect he's full mad enough to, though!" and she changed her tune to "Lanigan's Ball."

She was in the middle of the fifth course when she became aware of Mr. Royal beside her, hammer in hand. "I will relieve you now, Jemima!" he said severely. "I am obliged to you for your assistance, but —"

"Can't hear a thing!" Miss Jimmy shouted. "You lay, and I'll hammer, and we'll get on twice as fast! Nine — ten —

no use talking; that's my deaf side, let alone —"

"Rat tat tat tat tat tat tat-a-tat,"—

Earl Royal hesitated; ran his eye along the lines of shingles, and saw that they were very good; gave up the fight, and began laying shingles in his best style, muttering under his breath such maledictions as a church member may mutter.

"*Rat* tat tat-a-tat tat-a-tat tat!"

For some time the hammer rang out merrily, keeping time, time, time, to Miss Jimmy's runic rhyme. Earl Royal knew nothing of Lanigan's Ball, but he was bound to keep up with this interfering woman, and unconsciously he laid shingle as he had never laid before. Finey, listening in the room below, nodded, and finally dozed off to the sound of flying hammers.

The sixth course was done. Pausing a moment to rub her aching wrists, Miss

Jimmy happened to look toward the street, and saw Captain Applegate standing by the garden wall, looking up with wondering eyes.

"Good evening, Cap'n!" she called. "Step in, won't you? I'll be down in half a minute."

"Don't let me interrupt you, Jimmy!" said the old gentleman. "I was just thinking I'd come in and pass the time of day, that's all; no occasion for you to come down till you're good and ready."

"I'm ready this minute!" Miss Jimmy announced. "If you'll step in, sir,—"

"If you'll step in, sir," echoed Earl Royal, "I'll be down at once."

"Oh, no occasion! no occasion at all, sir!" protested Captain Applegate feebly. He could not abide Earl Royal, and Miss Jimmy knew it.

"I'll go, Earl!" she said kindly. "I've done my stint, and more, and you'll want to finish yours."

"I am going down, Jemima!" said Mr. Royal acidly. "My wrist pains me, and I must rest it; besides, I receive the gentlemen visitors in my own house!"

His own house! something seemed to break inside Jimmy Dolly. In a flash they passed before her eyes, father, mother, sister, home, friends,— all, all her own. And now —

The two were kneeling close together on the roof. In her anger the little woman unconsciously quickened her stroke, and her hammer was poised in air before the next shingle was laid. What was her father's old saying?

> "If hammer gets ahead of lay,
> Pin his tails and let him stay;
> He's no right to say you nay!"

Earl Royal's hand was outstretched toward the ladder; kling! klang! two sharp strokes rang out; Miss Jimmy slipped down

the ladder squirrel-like, and ran into the house. A roar followed her. "Jemima! come back! I am fastened to the roof. Release me this instant!"

Had Miss Jimmy a deaf ear? We had never noticed it. A bright color shone in her cheeks as she shook hands with the old gentleman, and told him he was a sight for poor eyes.

"So are you!" said the Captain gallantly. "Why, Jimmy, you look as handsome as a picture; what have you been doing to yourself?"

"It's — it's the exercise, I expect!" said Miss Jimmy. "I've been helping Mr. Royal with his shingling, and it's — *my stars!*"

A sound of scrambling on the roof; a loud cry; something shot down past the window and landed with a thud on the grass. Mrs. Royal uttered a scream; Captain Applegate rose to his feet, trembling. Miss Jimmy ran out, and found her brother-in-

law, in his shirt-sleeves, lying on the ground, gasping for breath.

"Any bones broke?" she asked; and felt him all over swiftly and skillfully! "No, I think not; see if you can get up, Earl!"

Mr. Royal tried to rise, and fell back groaning. "My ankle!" he cried. "It's broke, I know it is! you — you dum woman, you!"

"Well, I never was called *that* before!" said Miss Jimmy demurely. "Let me see! easy now, while I get your shoe off — there! hurt you then?"

Mr. Royal screamed aloud.

"Just as I thought; you've sprained your ankle. Lean on me now, and I'll hobble you in and bandage it in no time. Don't scare Finey! Here we come, Finey!" she called in the doorway. "Earl has sprained his ankle just a mite, and we're coming in together; don't you be scared, for there's no occasion!"

"Oh! oh!" moaned Finey. "Are you

killed, Early? Are you? Am I a widow?"

"Now, ma'am! now, ma'am!" said Captain Applegate soothingly. "Don't take on; I see your husband this minute, as you will in half a minute more, looking just as — as handsome as usual."

"Am I a widow?" moaned Mrs. Royal. "Is my Early dead? oh! oh!"

"Stop!" said Miss Jimmy; and she "hobbled" Mr. Royal round the corner of the winged chair and plumped him down in the seat opposite his wife.

"Does he look dead?" she asked grimly. "Well, then! let's have no more of this!"

Even at the best of it, one cannot fall from a roof with comfort; and beside the sprained ankle, Mr. Royal's meagre form had "sustained," as the newspapers say, many and severe bruises; moreover, he was of the opinion that "his vitals were jounced completely together." Altogether, flat repose seemed the thing for him, both on Finey's

account and his own, and Miss Jimmy never drew breath till she had put him to bed, rubbed him with soap and opium liniment, and given him a good stiff dose of blackberry cordial.

When all this was accomplished, and Finey soothed with a large wedge of angel cake, just to stay her till supper time, Miss Jimmy opened the front door quietly, and encountered Mrs. Shute on the doorstep. Slipping quietly out, she shut the door behind her. "Good evening, Mrs. Shute!" she said calmly, "lovely evening, isn't it?"

"The evening's well enough," replied Mrs. Shute, who was wrapped in a shawl, and seemed out of breath; "but I want to know what is going on here, Jimmy. What is that coat doing up on the roof? It gave me such a turn! I looked over across, and I thought 'twas someone waving his arms and beckoning me. I hastened right over, fear something was wrong, and lo, ye, 'twas an empty coat, nothing else."

Miss Jimmy looked up at the garment which was certainly waving its empty arms in the evening breeze. "It's Mr. Royal's coat;" she said slowly; "he was shingling, and he — came down and left it there. I was just going up to get it."

CHAPTER VIII

DAN WILSON COMES HOME

EARL ROYAL was really badly shaken up, and Miss Jimmy tended him with remorseful solicitude. She whisked in and out with trays; she concocted all manner of delicate dishes; she rubbed and bandaged, soothed and cajoled, flitting between the two invalids, till her little feet could hardly carry her. Mrs. Shute, in her rôle of adoptive aunt, protested.

"You'll kill yourself, Jimmy," she said, "or break down, one of the two; and then who is to look after the three of you? I ask you that!"

"Don't say a word!" cried Miss Jimmy. "Mrs. Shute, I know what I say is for this room only, and I have to speak out sometimes, or my soul will break from my body.

Well, then — of course I feel to blame. If he hadn't had to get his coat off, he mightn't have slipped — no, of course he didn't have to, but he thought he had, or at least,— well, he was going to, anyway; and so there's that against me. And Finey's grieving so is another thing; I'd no business to do anything that would lead to Finey's grieving; and — well, I suppose the worst of all is,— well, if it wasn't for Finey — if it wasn't for Finey, Mrs. Shute, I've got Earl Royal just where I want him!"

"Jimmy Dolly!"

"I know; it's awful; but it's the truth. So unless the Pit is to get me sure, I'm bound to do the very best I can for the man, don't you see? Don't worry about me, I'm tough. The thing that troubles me, besides Finey and my wicked conscience, is Mr. Lindsay."

"What ails Mr. Lindsay? Is he sick too?"

"No! but he needs companionship. He's

got into the way of coming to me about things — plants, or ferns, or a bit of copying, or like that,— and I can't seem to get round to it these days, try as I may. I'm afraid he misses it just the least bit."

"Do you want we should take him over here for a spell?" asked Mrs. Shute.

Miss Jimmy was suddenly and curiously conscious that this was the last thing she wanted; also that the blood was tingling in her cheeks, and that there was a dull ache somewhere about her.

"No!" she said. "I want you to lend me Persis!"

Persis came willingly enough. By this time she was ready to go or come anywhere Miss Jimmy bade her; in fact, she had become her aide and lieutenant. Everybody saw the change in the girl. She still looked sad — that is, except when she was taking care of a baby or "tending out" on a sick or lonely person,— but it was a friendly, almost a cheerful sadness, very different from

the sullen gloom of the past year or two. Now, under the same roof with her adored leader, the veil thinned still more, became a pensiveness just tinged with melancholy. She read the weekly paper to Finey; with unerring judgment she skimmed the cream of the *Druggist's Digest* for Mr. Royal; she was a capital hand at gruel and cocoa, and what Miss Jimmy called fancy nourishment in general. She was precisely the right one, Miss Jimmy assured herself; just the right one in every way — all but —

All but, indeed! Now, when Mr. Lindsay appeared in the doorway with his appealing smile and timid — "Have you five minutes to spare, Miss Dolly?" Miss Jimmy would smile back, and say, "Not just this moment, Mr. Lindsay, I haven't. I'll send Persis up; she'll do as well or better!"

Then she would turn resolutely back to her work, for in the back of her head she knew that the smile had faded into a look of sorrowful bewilderment, and she knew that

Persis would not do as well or better. Persis would go up, and Miss Jimmy would go down on her knees and rub Earl Royal's ankle with dogged persistence. Mr. Royal's high-pitched monologue descriptive of his sufferings went on and on, but she hardly heard it; her thoughts were in the upper chamber, where the deep, musical voice would be reading some passage of beauty or power; or where two heads, one fair and apostolic, the other dark and pensive, were bending together over manual or microscope. Strange, though, that they were so quick nowadays; it would not be ten minutes before Mr. Lindsay would be leaving the house, and Persis would come down to announce cheerfully that he didn't need her any more.

"She hasn't got the hang of it yet!" said Miss Jimmy. "But she's got to; she has just plain got to, that's all there is to that!"

And what became of the shop in these days? Why, there was another burden for

the brave little shoulders. Twice a day Miss Jimmy "kept store" for an hour. Morning and evening found her at her post, alert and cheerful, ready to dispense soda (in glasses or tablets), plasters or powders, syrups or tinctures. She refused to put up prescriptions, spite of the pressure brought to bear upon her by anxious neighbors who were sure she knew ten times what Earl Royal did; but she could and did advise remedies for anything from headache to bunions. The one thing she would not sell was patent medicines. Earl Royal dealt largely in tonics and panaceas, all with high-sounding names, all infallible, all — Miss Jimmy declared — Trash and Turnip-trimmings. To customers demanding these, she showed a countenance of flint.

"Antiache? No, ma'am, I can't give you that. Yes, I know you see the bottle right there, but I don't sell it. Well, Mr. Royal may, but I am not Mr. Royal, nor no resemblance that I'm aware of. Suffering?

Now if you'll sit down half a minute, and tell me how you feel, I may be able to relieve you, and save you seventy-five cents into the bargain."

"He would have a fit!" said Miss Jimmy to herself, as the customer departed jubilant, with a quarter's worth of "good wholesome stuff" in a pint bottle; "he certainly would; caniptions would be no name for it, but I can't help it. Mammon alone is bad enough, but Mammon and Satan bottled up together is more than I can stand."

The children soon found out about Miss Jimmy's store-keeping, and clamored loudly for a time when they could have her for their own; so she announced that Wednesday and Saturday afternoons from four to five o'clock would thenceforward be Children's Hour, and no grown person need apply. The warning was needless; no grown person could get in. The shop was thronged with eager children; they sat on the counter, on the steps, on the floor; they had cakes

from Miss Jimmy's bag, and peppermint and lime juice tablets from the shining glass jars on the shelves. They had one glass of soda apiece if they were ten or over, and a teaspoonful of syrup if they were younger; and for all these things (except the cakes, which were of her own making), Miss Jimmy paid with scrupulous exactness, slipping her dimes and quarters into the till with a defiant air, and closing it with a bang. "Beholden, indeed!" she might be heard to mutter to herself.

One day, as she closed the till, Miss Jimmy chanced to look up, and saw a man standing outside, looking in at the window. His hat was slouched over his eyes so that she could not see his face; he stood for a moment, then lounged off carelessly. Miss Jimmy followed him with her eyes. "Who is that, Tommy?" she asked. "No one about here, is it? And yet there's something about those round shoulders —"

"Mostly he isn't," replied Tommy, a ma-

ture philosopher of ten; "but sometimes he is; round here, I mean. He's no good wherever he is, father says; and mother says, when he comes home, look out for your clo'esline! He's a — whisper. Miss Jimmy! he's a thief!"

"Isn't that too bad!" said Miss Jimmy. "but perhaps he just forgets that things aren't his, Tommy. I knew a man once,—"

Miss Jimmy had just settled her home party for the evening. Mr. Royal was on the couch in the sitting-room, his first promotion from bed; Finey was dressed up for the occasion, in her best pink jacket with lace frills,— Sister Jimmy's gift — a rose-colored ribbon braided in her soft dusky hair, her ox-eyes shining with contentment, a plate of chocolate-drops beside her on the little stand. She was prattling to her husband, who seemed to listen with pleasure. Persis was writing for Mr. Lindsay upstairs. All

was done now till bedtime came, and with it the long evening toilet, the alcohol bath, the massage, the final cup of gruel.

The little nurse stole to the door and looked out. It was moonlight, the May moon, shining on a world of apple-blossoms, pale green and rose; a world shy, virginal, delicate,— oh, beautiful! Miss Jimmy thought of the arid, gritty streets, the hurrying crowds, the keen, nervous faces; she drew a deep breath of the fragrant air. She glanced back at the lighted room, at the married pair. "I'm not wanted there!" she thought. She turned, and saw a long ray of light slanting across the road from above. "Nor there!" she added with a sigh; half remorseful, for was she speaking the truth this time?

She stepped out, closing the door softly behind her. "There must be something I ought to do!" murmured Miss Jimmy.

Then she straightened to "attention!"

"I knew there was! the alcohol; I forgot it this afternoon. There!"

She stepped back into the house, went to the pantry, and emerged with an empty bottle.

"I'm going down to the store, folks!" she announced, "to get some alcohol."

"You might bring me some gumdrops, Sister, if you're a mind to!" said Mrs. Royal.

"Be sure you lock the door!" piped Mr. Royal shrilly. Miss Jimmy's sniff was presumably in reply to the latter remark, for she said gently, "You shall have the gumdrops, honey!"

It was very quiet in the little shop. The air was sweet with familiar odors, orris and violet, quinine and myrrh; the red lamp burned softly, the glass jars and bottles glimmered a friendly greeting; their mystic inscriptions seemed to speak comfortable reminders of the hospital dispensary.

"I wonder what is the matter with me!" said Miss Jimmy. "Don't suppose I am tired, do you?"

She had hardly ever been tired in her life. "When I am tired," she was wont to say, "I shall die!"

She decided now that she must be "a little bilious!" She would mix herself a portion of soda and pepsin presently; now she would sit down just half a minute, till this dizziness passed off.

She sat down in the little alcove behind the counter, which Earl Royal had screened with a curtain to veil the pegs on which he hung his linen jacket and the apron he assumed when compounding prescriptions. She was asleep before her head touched the wall; the curtain fell over her.

Miss Jimmy was dimly aware of a mouse nibbling at the wainscot. It changed to the cat scratching at the door. She opened her lips drowsily to call "Kitty! Kitty!" but

before the words came she was broad awake, sitting alert and erect, listening keenly. The sound of a tool rasping on wood; someone at the till!

She peeped round the edge of the curtain; a man was standing behind the counter, his back to her, working busily away; a broad, round-shouldered man, with a hat slouched over his eyes; the man who had looked in at the window that afternoon!

Miss Jimmy considered a moment. What was to be done, must be done quickly; the wood was cracking, splintering; another moment and the drawer would be open.

Silent as a shadow, she stole from her hiding-place. With her left hand she seized the man's coat-collar firmly; with her right she dealt him a ringing blow on either ear; then, with a sudden jerk, she brought him to the floor, and promptly sat down on his feet. Then she looked at him. "Oh! it's you, is it?" said Miss Jimmy.

The man, utterly bewildered sat blink-

ing and rubbing his ears. He whimpered a little, but seemed incapable of motion.

"Don't know what struck you, eh?" said Miss Jimmy. "Well, it was I. Look at me, Dan Wilson!"

The man looked at her, and seemed to shrink into smaller compass.

"Know me now?" asked Miss Jimmy.

"Yes, 'm, Miss Dolly! I guess you've broke my ear, haven't you?"

He spoke humbly, and looked at his assailant with brown, dog-like eyes.

"I guess not. I'll put some hamamelis on it directly. Now I want to know what you have to say for yourself, Dan Wilson! I thought those round shoulders looked natural, when you looked in at the window this afternoon. Come, speak up!"

It appeared that Mr. Wilson had nothing to say for himself. He took off his shabby felt hat and rubbed his nose with it, in a manner which subtly conveyed apology, and desire for a tail to wag; then he looked at

the hat, and turned it round several times, as if in hope that it might furnish him with an idea; none being forthcoming, he rubbed his nose with it again, and looked helplessly at Miss Jimmy.

"I don't wonder you can't!" said that lady. "Very well! I'll speak for you."

She pointed a stern forefinger at the cringing figure before her.

"Dan Wilson," she said, "under Providence, I saved your life!"

The man moved uneasily, and seemed to need a tail more than ever.

"The Doctors had given you up; you had given yourself up. I thought there was one chance in a thousand, and I asked them to give you to me; I got that chance by the tail, and held on. The Lord being willing and knowledgeable to it, I rubbed your departing soul back into your perishing body and kept it there. Is that so?"

"Yes, ma'am!" murmured Mr. Wilson. "That's right, Miss Dolly; you did so!"

"Now the question is,"— the small forefinger was rigid with accusation,— "why the Lord was willing, if this was what was to come of it. If I had known, do you think I would have stirred a finger to keep you?"

"No, ma'am!" said Mr. Wilson again, still more humbly. "That's right, Miss Dolly! I expect you wouldn't."

"I most certainly would not. The Lord's ways are mysterious, though 'tis easy to see that you would have been none too welcome wherever 'twas you were going. So you were given another chance, and this is what has come of it. Well!"

Mr. Wilson was making feeble attempts to speak, and Miss Jimmy stopped with a terrier-like bark.

"Let's have it! Speak up!"

"Miss Dolly! ma'am! I'd like to tell you the way it was, if you'd be so good as listen. No insult, ma'am, but if you could see your way to moving just the least

mite off my shin, so it wouldn't pain me quite so much, I could speak freer like. No insult, Miss Dolly!"

Miss Jimmy rose deliberately, and seating herself on the counter, put the tip of one dainty shoe on the grimy ankle that protruded from Mr. Wilson's trousers. "There!" she said. "If you stir before I give you leave, I'll see to you!"

Mr. Wilson quailed visibly before this awful threat, and ducking his head submissively, went on.

"Miss Dolly, I did mean to keep off the crook, and I do mean it, honest I do, ma'am. It mayn't look that way just at present, but you wait! You see — I hadn't no funds; and wishing to start in honest like I promised you, I had to make a good appearance, don't you see? And — and besides,— well, you know, a man has his pride, Miss Dolly!"

"His pride!" echoed Miss Jimmy. Her eye ran over the loose, shabby, slouching

figure, the weak mouth, the lines of folly and worse than folly, the brown, dog-like eyes. "Lord have mercy upon us!" she murmured. "His pride — go on, Dan!" but her voice was softer as she said it.

"You see, Miss Dolly, I come from these parts. I've got a kind of a name round here, as you may say. It's on the crook, you may say, but still it's a name, and a man has his pride, and he likes to keep his name up."

"I see!" said Miss Jimmy.

Dan Wilson waved his arm with an ample gesture. "All the villages near hand by, folks hear I'm round, and they pass the word. 'Dan Wilson's home!' they say. 'Look out for doin's!' It's been so for years. I don't say it's a good name, mind you, but it's all the one I've got, and a man has his pride. Well! so far so good! Now I'm goin' to start in on the honest lay, and got to have funds to start in with, and so it seemed only right and proper to

get them round about here; don't you see, ma'am?"

"I see!" said Miss Jimmy again.

"It isn't only me, neither. I think some about the folks. It gives them a little chirk up; quiet neighborhood, you understand; nothing special happening right along. Stirs 'em up a mite, and does 'em good!"

"Particularly those you rob!" Miss Jimmy put in. "How about stealing from your old neighbors? Think that's pretty?"

"I was just comin' to that!" said Wilson eagerly. "I'd like to put it this way, Miss Dolly. I wouldn't take anything from good folks, nor folks that my folks was neighbor to (I never went on the crook till mother was gone, swelp me I didn't!); but there's mean folks everywhere, don't you see? And I heard this man Royal was a stranger, and mean as well, and I thought 'twouldn't do him a mite of harm to lose

some portion of what he squoze out of our own folks, as you might say."

"H'm!" said Miss Jimmy. "How does your ear feel now, Dan?"

"Thank you, Miss Dolly, it stings something awful, I'm obleeged to you. You've got a powerful hand, ma'am, you have so!"

"Comes of rubbing so much!" said Miss Jimmy briefly. "Now you may sit up, and I'll get the hamamelis."

It was some ten minutes after this that Charles Lindsay, hatless and breathless, came hurrying down the street. As he reached the shop, he glanced in at the lighted window and saw — or fancied he saw — Miss Jimmy kneeling on the floor, her hands raised as if in supplication. Beside her he caught a glimpse of a frowsy head, of broad, round shoulders,—

To dash in at the door, vault the counter, and seize the man by the throat, was the work of an instant. His blue eyes blazing, his voice trembling with rage, the

gentle apostle of peace and good will shook the astonished Wilson violently, and banged his head furiously against the wall. "Ruffian," he cried, "desist, I command you!"

Most people of active life run the gamut, at one time or another, of human emotions. Miss Jimmy now experienced, for the first time, hysterics. She laughed and cried, cried and laughed, as if she never would stop. Mr. Lindsay, in an agony of fright, implored her to calm herself, to tell him if she were injured, to allow him to minister — here he poured hamamelis all over her and set her off worse than ever.

But there was no laughter in Daniel Wilson. That unhappy man lifted up his voice and wept aloud.

"I'm all banged up!" he roared. "I'm 'most killed! She broke my ear, and now you've broke my head. I wish't I was back in jail; it's the only safe place for a pore man!"

CHAPTER IX

SENSATIONS

It was the day after this that we had the experience which kept us talking for nine days, and nine days after that.

The first thing was that early in the morning Mr. Lindsay borrowed Sam Shute's white horse. No one had ever seen the minister drive a horse, and Sam was pretty anxious, but he didn't like to say anything. "You can't ask your pastor if he is a born fool," said Sam, "and anybody except a born fool could drive that hoss!"

Sure enough, the minister drove off briskly in the direction of the Corners, handling the reins as if he had driven all his life. It was ironing day, but we all managed to keep an eye out of the front window through the morning, and we saw him return before

noon with a big bundle, and — after taking Messenger back — disappear with the bundle into the Dolly house shed. Hence he shortly emerged in company with a broad, round-shouldered man, decently clad, who walked beside him with an air at once furtive and sheepish, and who seemed in grievous need of a tail to wag. Gazing with all our eyes, we gasped as we recognized Dan Wilson. Dan Wilson, our own particular ne'erdo-weel! the village scapegrace, the village scapegoat, ever since his childhood, when he ran away from his stepmother — well, we didn't so much blame him for that — taking with him his father's watch and the four silver teaspoons. Dan Wilson, whose occasional advent set the boys whispering together in corners, and kept anxious housewives awake at night. Dan Wilson in a neat suit of pepper-and-salt, shaven, with his hair brushed — Hush! here they were at the door!

"Good morning, Mrs. Shute!" the min-

ister spoke loudly and cheerily, so that all the family could hear.

"This is my friend, and Miss Dolly's friend, Daniel Wilson. Daniel has suffered a change of heart, and is desirous of becoming a good citizen. He is aware that he has formerly been — a — otherwise, and he asks his neighbors, through me, to overlook past shortcomings, and to favor him with employment in — a — in short, chores!"

This was the minister's little speech, repeated almost *verbatim* in every house in the village. After each such speech, Mr. Wilson rubbed his nose with his hat in a propitiatory manner, smiled vaguely, and murmured, "That's right, Elder! chores! Marm learned me to do chores right smart!"

The responses to the speech were various. Some, like Mrs. Shute and Captain Applegate, shook the penitent by the hand, congratulated him on his change of heart, and wouldn't wonder a mite if they could scare up something for him to do first of the week.

Others, of the thin-lipped variety, cast sharp glances through their spectacles and said h'm! they'd see! To one and all it was plain that Miss Jimmy (for of course we all knew Miss Jimmy was behind it) had seized the strategic moment. Andy Toothaker, the village choreman, had recently announced that he was going to quit, and we were in despair. Andy had been too rheumatic to be much good these two years past, but still he had been there, and would, with much groaning, beat carpets and dig garden-beds when it was made clear to him that he simply *had* to. But now, he just plain couldn't, Miss Jimmy said so; and here it was house-cleaning time, and all — well, if Dan really did mean to "do different," he had chosen the one time of eternity to do it in, as Miss Jimmy said. And after all, his stepmother had really been —

"But she is no more!" said Mrs. Shute weightily; "and I for one shall do all I can for Dan'l. When his own mother was liv-

ing, he was as good a little boy as I would wish to see."

Before a month was over, we were wondering how we ever got on without Dan'l. He was amazingly quick for so heavy a man, and there was no end to his strength or his willingness. He beat the carpets, he dug the beds, he set out the plants, he tinkered here and did errands there; during all these occupations he babbled like a brook to all who would listen, of his change of heart, and of the wonderful qualities and nerve of Miss Jimmy.

"Yes, ma'am!" he would say. "She knocked Satan out of me one side, and banged the Lord in the other; and then she bound up my wownds and talked to me like a mother; and then in come Elder Lindsay and choked me and broke my head, and he talked to me like a father; and the two of 'em together brung me to a state of grace, and here I am. And what I says is, the Lord be praised! Selah!"

"And you are happier now, aren't you, Dan'l, than when you were living in sin?"

It was Miss Sarah Kitten who spoke. Dan had been putting down her stair carpet, and she was regaling him with doughnuts and milk.

"No comparison, ma'am!" Dan spoke with unction. "For one thing, your victuals set so much better. A crook, ma'am, has a queasy stomach, and it stands to reason. How can his food set easy when every livin' minute he's watchin' out for the cops? You see how 'twould be yourself. S'pose I had that there silverware in my pocket,"— Miss Sarah winced, and glanced uneasily at her precious spoons and forks — "would I be able to enjoy this doughnut the way I am? I guess not. What I say is, your soul and your stomach go together. Give either one of 'em a good chance, and it's helpful to the other."

So the Prodigal Dan rejoiced, and the village with him; everyone, that is, save

Earl Royal. Mr. Royal, though a church member, had no confidence in sudden conversions. He had been deeply disturbed by the attempted robbery of his cherished shop, and was firmly convinced that the reform of Dan Wilson was a sham and a blind. Women, he said, were easy imposed upon, and ministers little better; this was a very artful fellow. He had pulled the wool over Jemima's eyes, and Mr. Lindsay's, and between them they had talked folks over; but let Wilson get a Man's Eye onto him, and they should see!

Dan, working peacefully in the garden, was aware at times of this Eye, peering malevolently at him from the kitchen window. If he stopped to straighten his round shoulders and pass the time of day with a neighbor, the window would be raised, and a thin, sharp voice would ask him how long he was going to be on that row. He was glad enough when the garden was done, and Miss Jimmy set him to finish the unlucky

shingling. Even here the sharp voice pursued him, punctuating every pause with — "Wilson! my ear is upon you, if my eye is not! proceed with your work!"

"Darn that man!" said Dan mildly, addressing the hammer. "He annoys me. 'Twould have been full as agreeable all round if he'd have broke his darned neck off'n this roof; my opinion!"

Soon after this, Mr. Royal got back to the store, and the household atmosphere lightened. The till had been mended, and Miss Jimmy, aided by Persis and Dan, had given the whole place a thorough cleaning, so that everything shone and glittered like the New Jerusalem, as Miss Jimmy put it. She had sent private orders to the City, and the peppermint and lime-juice tablet jars were full to the brim. She accompanied Mr. Royal on his first visit, partly lest he should be fatigued by the walk, or need assistance, partly, as she owned afterward to Mrs. Shute, to see what he would say.

"And what did he?" asked that lady. "He must have been pleased, Jimmy. Why, you could have the Sewing Society in that store; I never saw anything so neat!"

"Pleased!" Miss Jimmy snorted. "He screwed his eyes up tight, and went nosing here and mousing there, fairly suffering to find something wrong. At last and finally he saw the curtain we washed. We thought it came out beautiful, you know, but he pounced on it in a minute. 'Jemima,' he says, 'this curtain is ruined. It has faded, and shrunk besides!' and that was every word he had to say."

Looking backward, it seems as if almost everything that ever happened in Tupham — out of the common line, that is,— happened that year. One thing seemed to lead straight on to the next, like scenes in a play, or chapters in a story-book. The next thing was about Earl Royal's money.

About a month after Dan Wilson came

home, Mr. Royal borrowed Messenger, Sam Shute's white horse, to drive over to the Corners.

Sam used to say,— it was his standard joke, and he never tired of it,— that he was postmaster in order to get out of Beulah's way daytimes, but that his real business was his livery stable. It is true that we did borrow Messenger a good deal. There were other horses in the village, of course, but they were commonly in use, whereas Messenger mostly stood in the stable, or browsed about the yard, except for an hour after supper, when Sam took Beulah or some of the children for a "buggy-ride."

Messenger had belonged to Sam's father, and had begun life as a lively dapple-gray colt; he was now snow white, and would never see thirty-five again. He knew more, in Sam's opinion, than anyone in that village, four legs or two. He could untie with his teeth any knot that ordinary man could tie; he could open any door that was not

locked (a bolt was nothing to him; he pushed with soft, persistent nose till it was out of the socket), and squint through any knothole within his reach. He was sound and kind in any harness, but if put under saddle he would — after standing like a rock till the rider was mounted — lie down quietly and roll him off. There were as many stories about him as he had lived years. Once, when Sam's little Lucy was driving down a steep hill, the breeching broke, letting the wagon down on Messenger's heels. Most horses we knew would have kicked under these circumstances. Messenger braced himself well, and step by step picked his way down the hill as a dancer picks her way along a slack wire. Safe at the bottom, he shook himself, turned round and whinnied encouragement to the frightened child, then trotted briskly home along the level. That was the kind of thing for which you could count upon Messenger; that, and going home at noon. Wherever he might be, whatever

might be going on, when twelve o'clock struck Messenger went home. That was one reason why our funerals were held at two o'clock. They used, twenty years ago, to be at half-past eleven, just after the stage came in from Cyrus; but when old Mr. Byers, Mrs. Shute's father, died, it was mortifying for the family to be taken home instead of to the cemetery, and somehow the hour was changed after that.

Well, as I said, Earl Royal borrowed Messenger to drive over to the Corners. An insurance dividend had fallen in, three hundred dollars, and he wished to deposit it in the Savings Bank.

"You know he likes to be home come noon!" said Sam mildly. Yes, Mr. Royal knew that; there would be no trouble, he was obliged to Sam. But he did not know it as well as we did, who had driven behind Messenger! The Bank was open till one o'clock, and Earl was detained at the lawyer's office at the other end of the street; he

thought a few minutes would make no difference; and finally, he got into the buggy and started for the Bank just as the noon whistle blew. Well! any of us could have told him how it would be. Messenger went home. Mr. Royal pulled and shouted and whipped till he was lame and hoarse and sore; he might have been a paper doll (a Corners man told us who saw him), for all the notice that horse took. Messenger struck into a smart road gait, and never slackened his pace till he trotted into Sam's yard and stopped at the stable door. Sam was waiting for them, and one look at Mr. Royal's purple face and protruding eyes told him what had happened.

"I kep' my countenance!" said Sam. "'You come back a pooty good clip!' was all I said. The hoss was all of a larther, you see. Well, he passed some remarks, but I could make allowances for a short-tempered man who had been hustled over the ro'd at a three-minute gait with three hundred dollars

in his pants pocket that he didn't want to have there. But what I say is, that's what comes of not understanding animals. The man thought because the hoss had four legs and no gift of speech, there was no heed of paying any special attention to him. Now if he'd sensed the fact that Messenger knew his own mind full as well as what he did his'n, and had four times the stren'th to carry it out,— well, things wouldn't be where they are now, that's all!"

For things were at a terrible pass. The very night of Messenger's escapade, Mr. Royal's money disappeared, stolen, he declared, from under his pillow as he slept.

CHAPTER X

A TERROR BY NIGHT

"I TELL you, Jemima, that money was stolen by Dan'l Wilson. I am as certain of it as if I had seen him take it with these eyes."

"And I tell you, Earl, it is not so. I know Dan, and I have seen him on the crook and off it. He never took one cent of that money!

"Jemima!" said Mr. Royal with dignity. "This is a matter which I must decide for myself. The weaker vessel—"

"Oh, Lord!" said Miss Jimmy; and she went into the buttery and shut the door.

"The weaker vessel," Mr. Royal continued, turning an austere glance on his trembling wife, "shall be subject untoe the stronger!"

"Yes, Earl!" said Sylphine meekly.

"In domestic affairs woman may occasionally take the lead; she is thereuntoe created and ordained. In matters of law and order, let her hold her peace!"

"Yes, Earl!" said Sylphine, piteously.

"Better is a dinner of herbs, and quietness therewith," cried Mr. Royal shrilly, "than a contentious woman in a wide—"

"Oh, Early!" cried poor Finey, bursting into tears. "I never contended with you, indeed I never did. Oh! oh!"

Miss Jimmy emerged from the buttery with a set face, carrying a tray with glasses on it.

"Here!" she said briefly. "Take your eggnog, both of you! Finey, it's time for your nap. Earl, you're all worked up; you'd better go and lie down on the bed a spell."

"I shall not lay down!" Mr. Royal announced with dignity.

"I wouldn't if I was you!" replied Miss

Jimmy unexpectedly. "Come, Finey, take it all, that's a good girl!"

Finey took her eggnog in sobbing sips; Mr. Royal absorbed his in angry gulps, glaring over the glass at his sister-in-law. "Jemima," he began, as soon as he had drained the last drops — but Miss Jimmy turned on him with a terrier snap.

"Let's have no more talk!" she said. "I've got to get Finey quiet for her nap. That's more important than your money or —"

She closed her lips firmly, and taking her sister's hand led her away in silence.

"The Law and the Prophets!" she announced cheerfully, as a few minutes later she plumped down on her knees beside the bed. "I ought to say the Gospel too," she added penitently, "but it isn't in me to-day."

The village did not know what to think. Most of us believed in Dan's innocence, partly because Miss Jimmy and Elder Lindsay did, partly because Dan's eyes were brown and dog-like, partly — if it must be

confessed — because Earl Royal declared him guilty. Lawyer Crane shook his head and looked ponderous. It was a grave matter, he said; a very grave matter. Here was a large sum of money, a *very* large sum of money, taken from a respectable citizen. Such being the case, the question was, who had taken it? Suspicion must fall upon someone; the question was upon whom did suspicion naturally fall? Did it fall upon one of our neighbors, who had been coming in and going out among us in his daily walk, or did it fall upon a stranger — since the years of his childhood — whose ways had been devious, and whose record was — ahem! poor?

Thus Lawyer Crane, leaning against Sam Shute's desk in the postoffice, and laying down his points with his gold-rimmed eyeglass. He was very impressive; but of course he would stand up for Earl Royal, seeing he was partly responsible for his being in the position he was.

"The p'int I make," Sam responded calmly, "is that Dan isn't a stranger. We all know Dan. We all know he never had a chance at home, and was led astray, and so went; and I expect I'm not the only man in this village feels ashamed down to the ground that we never tried to give him a hand up till Miss Jimmy showed us the way. But what I say is, Dan has a good disposition, and he is grateful, if ever I see a man grateful, for what has been done for him; and I don't believe he would go back on Miss Jimmy and Elder Lindsay, not for three hundred dollars nor yet for three thousand. No, sir, I do not!"

Lawyer Crane shook his head weightily. "Time will show!" he said.

"That's right!" said Sam Shute.

We had it back and forth for a week; and all the time Earl Royal grew more and more vindictive, and Sylphine more and more tearful, and Miss Jimmy more and more monosyllabic and terrier-like. As for Dan

Wilson himself, he was a piteous object, and shed daily tears over his rows of young vegetables.

"You don't think I done it, Cap'n Apple, do ye? You know full well I wouldn't do that, don't ye, sir?"

"Certainly not, Dan!" the Captain responded, puffing fiercely at his pipe. "Of course you wouldn't. Stuff and nonsense!"

"Because what I say is, would I be here if I'd ha' done it? If I was that description of skunk, and had took money off'n anybody connected with Miss Jimmy Dolly any way, shape or manner, though no more resemblance than between — well, call it a angel and a alligator — what I say is, wouldn't I have got up and got, and not stay round here to be called names that I cast behind me along of Satan when I found religion?"

"Of course you would!" assented Captain Applegate. "Stuff and nonsense! stick it out, Dan! Do your duty as an able sea-

man — I would say a good fellow — and stick it out! I'll stand by you, and so will the best people in the village; the best people, sir!"

"Well, I guess!" said Dan. "Miss Jimmy Dolly she stands by me, and Elder Lindsay, and old lady Shute, and Sam. I'd like to see any better folks in this village or any other, and proud to name you with 'em, Cap'n Apple, sir!"

One day Miss Jimmy, coming in from her morning round, found her sister weeping bitterly, her whole creamy, billowy bulk heaving with convulsive sobs.

"Oh dear!" she lamented. "What shall I do? Oh dear me, what ever *shall* I do?"

Thus much Miss Jimmy heard as she entered the door. Coming swiftly forward, she knelt down by her sister's chair, and took her in her strong, slender arms. "What is it, darling?" she said quietly. "Tell Jimmy, honey! what ails my beauty girl?"

"Oh, I'm scared!" moaned Sylphine. "I'm scared to death, sister. What shall I do?"

"What are you scared of, darling? Tell Jimmy! there sha'n't anything hurt you while I am here. Tell sister what it is!"

But Mrs. Royal shook her head. "I darsn't!" she cried. "I darsn't do it. I can't tell anybody. Oh, my poor husband! what shall I do?"

It took a solid hour of Law and Prophets and Gospel all together to bring her round, but it was done. The convulsive sobs gave place to deep sighs, these in turn to slow, quiet breathing. At length the great beautiful creature lay quiescent, every muscle relaxed, her eyes closed, her bosom heaving in light, rhythmic motion. The nurse rose from her knees and spoke under her breath.

"Lift it off your mind, honey! tell me what it is, and then go to sleep and leave it to me!"

"Promise not to tell Earl!" murmured Finey drowsily.

"I promise!"

"He — Earl — walks — in his sleep. He —took — the money — himself!"

She drew a long, deep breath, turned her head on the pillow, and slept.

All through that day Miss Jimmy was as one walking in a dream. She stepped softly, spoke low and seldom. When, after two hours of sound sleep, her sister woke, she was beside her with a glass of lemonade and a plate of freshly baked golden sponge cakes. Watching her intently, she saw the first bewilderment of waking pass, and the look of fright come into the dark eyes. Miss Jimmy spoke in quiet, even tones.

"We won't talk about anything special till after dinner, honey. I've made a caramel custard, and it has come out lovely. And Tibby has five kittens, every one handsomer than the last. I'm going to bring 'em in

here in their basket, and you shall say which two we keep."

But dinner over — a very special dinner, over the memory of which Mrs. Royal would ordinarily have ruminated peacefully through the afternoon, till it was time to think about the approaching supper,— and Mr. Royal departed to the shop, Miss Jimmy brought her knitting and sat down on her favorite stool at her sister's feet.

"Now, darling," she said, "let's have it! take it easy; don't hurry, but tell me every single thing about it!"

Slowly, with many sighs, Sylphine told her strange tale. How, the night before last, waking at midnight, she had seen her husband kneeling in the corner of the room with bowed head. How she thought he was praying, and, like the simple, pious soul she was, folded her hands and began to whisper "Now I lay me;" when he rose and turned on her a dreadful face. His eyes were wide

open, and set in a glassy stare. "Oh! he looked like he was dead!" cried the poor woman, shuddering. "You never saw anything so awful, sister. I opened my mouth to scream out; but thank the Lord, before I did he moved his hand, and I looked and saw he was holding a big brown envelope. I knew it in a minute for the one he had the money in, and then the whole thing come over me. Oh dear! He stood there — the moon was bright as day — and he took the money out and counted it over, feeling of every bill with his fingers, and his eyes still staring that awful way. Then he put it back into the envelope, and went down on his knees again and tucked it under the edge of the carpet; and then he came back to bed. All the time I didn't dare stir a finger, or so much as breathe out loud, for fear of waking him. I knew if I did he might foam at the mouth and pass away. Yes!" as Miss Jimmy uttered an exclamation; "'tis so, sister! Sarah Kitten told me of a man over Tinkham way; he walked, and his

wife spoke to him sudden, and he did just that, foamed at the mouth and passed away."

"Well!" Miss Jimmy spoke patiently. "Grant it so; but you've got the money safe now, have you, dear?"

Mrs. Royal wrung her hands distressfully. "Oh! if I had!" she cried. "If I only had! but I didn't dare tell him a thing about it, for if you tell a person he walks, he will pine away and die within the year, Sarah Kitten says so. So I thought I would wait till he was asleep last night, and then get up and hide it somewheres, and just tell him I'd found it in such a place. Oh dear! oh dear me! and then when last night come I was so tired I fell right asleep the minute my head touched the pillow, and never woke till 'twas morning and he getting up. The moment he was out of the room I made haste to that corner, and felt under the carpet up to my elbows, but 'twas gone. He's taken and hid it somewhere else. Oh! sister, what *shall* I do?"

"You don't need to do anything at all, my beauty girl!" said Miss Jimmy comfortably. "Not a single solitary thing, except stop worrying. Sister'll see to it for you, and we'll have it fixed up in no time."

"But what does it mean, Jimmy, do you suppose? You don't suppose his mind is failing, do you? Oh, my poor husband!"

"I do not. There's nothing the matter with his mind. He has been fretting himself into a cacaxy over this, and on top of that — let me see! what did we —"

Her mind's eye ran rapidly over the *menus* of the past two days.

"Veal and ham pie!" she announced triumphantly. "I made that big one, you know, to last over ironing, and I made it specially good to see if I couldn't bring Mr. Lindsay to take notice of it. He never did — I might have known he wouldn't — but Earl took notice enough for all hands, and cold again last night. And I do believe," cried Miss Jimmy, clapping her little hands,

"there's a corner left still, enough to disagree with him real well to-night."

"Oh! sister," said Finey piteously, "you wouldn't upset Early's stomach!"

"I would! and what's more, he would upset three stomachs, if he had them, to get his money back, you know he would. I might put in the whole day rummaging the house and not find it, and I haven't time anyhow, when all we have to do is wait till night and let him find it for us."

Finey was beginning another protest; but at this moment voices were heard outside, and Mr. Royal entered, followed by a keen-faced man whom he introduced as Sheriff Comstock of the Corners.

"Mr. Comstock," he said importantly, "has come hither on an errand of justice. Ahem!"

"You wicked-looking weasel," said Miss Jimmy to herself, "what iniquity are you up to now?"

Outwardly calm, she greeted the stranger courteously.

"Justice is always welcome in Tupham, Mr. Comstock, I'm sure. Pray be seated!"

The sheriff, with a cough of civility, seated himself on the edge of a chair, and drew a paper from his pocket.

"Always a pity, I think," he said suavely, "to bring business into a pleasure party, as an interview with ladies is sure to be; but Mr. Royal thought one of you ladies —"

He glanced at Finey, and met an ox-eyed look, plaintive and bewildered; he glanced at Miss Jimmy. "That is —" he addressed the latter directly — "that you, ma'am, took an especial interest in the case, and so —"

"The case being —?" asked Miss Jimmy quietly.

"The arrest of that thief!" cried Mr. Royal shrilly. "That rascal shall be brought to justice, no matter what —"

"Nothing proven! nothing proven!" said the sheriff blandly. "I have a warrant, ma'am, for the arrest of one Daniel Wilson, on suspicion of larceny. Is there any such

person on the premises, to your knowledge?"

"He's in the garden, hilling the potatoes!" said Miss Jimmy. "I want to get the job done to-day. If you could wait till morning before you arrest him, sir, it would be an accommodation."

"Yes, and give him time to get off safe!" snarled Mr. Royal. "I guess not! Mr. Sheriff, I swore out that warrant, and I call upon you to serve it!"

The sheriff looked from one to the other. Mr. Royal, his eyes emitting green sparks, his sharp features twisted into their most weasel-like aspect, was not a pleasing object. Miss Jimmy's air was calm and cheerful, and her bright brown eyes met the sheriff's with a look which he inwardly characterized as "sing'lar knowin'!"

He addressed her civilly.

"In a general way, ma'am, my duty is to serve the warrant without delay; but if you have any evidence to show —"

"I have!" said Miss Jimmy. "If you'll step outside with me half a minute —"

She made way for him to pass her in the doorway, and followed him, shutting the door in Mr. Royal's face with neatness and dexterity. That gentleman turned upon his wife, literally gnashing his teeth.

"Sylphine," he cried, "your sister is — is — I tell you she is the limit! You are a married woman, and I call upon you to put her in her place and keep her there!"

"Oh, Earl!" cried poor Finey. "I am sure all sister asks is to please you!"

At this monstrous sentiment, uttered with transparent sincerity, Mr. Royal could only gibber speechless; his glaring aspect frightened his timid Sultana.

"Early dear," she faltered, "you don't look real well to-day. I don't believe but you've got dyspepsia. I — I wouldn't eat any more of that meat pie, if I was you; it's real rich!"

"I shall eat," Mr. Royal announced,

"whatsoever I have a mind to. My stomach is my own, if nothing else is!"

"Oh, Early!" lamented Finey, "don't speak like that to me! you know everything I have is yours, Early dear!"

Earl Royal really loved his wife, and had never ceased to regard her as the incarnation of his boyhood dreams of beauty; seeing her lovely face uplifted imploringly to his, the long lashes fringed with tears, the perfect mouth quivering and drooping at the corners, his own face softened, and when he spoke it was in a gentler tone.

"You meant no harm, Finey, so no harm is done; but I'll have to regulate my own eating, you see, my dear."

"Yes, Early dear!" said Finey. At this moment the door opened, and the sheriff entered, again followed by Miss Jimmy. His eyes were twinkling, and he stroked his moustache with a large hand; her eyes were cast down, her whole aspect demure and sedate. She sat down modestly in a corner and began to knit industriously.

"Ahem!" began Mr. Comstock. "Well, Mr. Royal, the evidence Miss — Miss Dolly has submitted is undoubtedly important."

"What is it?" snapped Mr. Royal. "I demand to hear it!"

"Well!" the sheriff stroked his moustache again. "There are circumstances, you see, Mr. Royal, which render it expedient — ahem! in short, I have agreed to wait until morning before making any arrest, and meantime, I am of opinion, the less said about it the better."

"I engaged you, sir!" screamed Mr. Royal. "I swore out that warrant, and I call upon you to serve it, this instant!"

"Just so! I am sure that when the matter is clear to you, Mr. Royal, you will be convinced that I acted for the best. Meanwhile —"

"Meanwhile," shouted the furious man, "the thief will get away! I will not submit to this! I — I — I will arrest him myself!"

"Meanwhile," the sheriff continued

calmly, "Daniel Wilson has given his word not to — a — evade the law, and bail has been offered by Mr. Samuel Shute for the amount in question, three hundred dollars. I apprehend that no further steps are necessary to be taken at present, so I will bid you good afternoon. *Good* afternoon, Mr. Royal and lady! Miss Dolly, I am your very humble servant!"

CHAPTER XI

IN THE NIGHT

It was deep night. All was still, save for an occasional creak or mutter, as the old house talked to itself. After supper's fitful fever,— he had finished the veal and ham pie, and topped off with five doughnuts,— Mr. Royal slept well. Sylphine slumbered peacefully beside him. Assured that Sister would attend to it all, and that nothing should hurt her Earl, she had dismissed unprofitable thought, and gone to sleep like the good girl she was.

Mr. Lindsay was not asleep. He had written out his notes of the day's expedition, and then looked for his book, a new and exhaustive treatise on the sphagni of the Scandinavian Peninsula, over which he promised

himself an hour of delight before going to bed. He had put it in a special place so that he might be sure of finding it; but it was not there. Sadly he began a toilsome search, wondering why it was that Miss Shute could not leave his things alone. Miss Dolly would have understood in a moment that he had had a purpose in placing the volume on top of the open closet door, where it was on a level with his eye, and where there was no danger of his covering it up with papers. Miss Dolly always understood; but Miss Shute seemed to have no comprehension whatever of — of such matters.

Poor Persis! and she had gone home so pleased, thinking that Mr. Lindsay might want that book, and might have looked for it till morning if she had not taken it down — how ever it came up there who could imagine? and laid it on the table right to his hand. Now it was snowed under, a whole sermon piled on top of it, and after ten minutes of increasingly distressful search, the

minister gave up in despair, and sat down disconsolately in his armchair.

He did not like Persis Shute! He wanted Miss Jimmy. He wanted her all day long, more and more. No one, since Rose Ellen died, had ever understood him till he met her; no one had known the few — they were so very few! — things he wanted, the innumerable things which bewildered and worried and wearied him. A book to read, a pad to write on, a receptacle for his specimens, and liberty to speak twice a week to his brothers and sisters in the spirit, and give them the thoughts which came to him in his wanderings abroad with God — these things were all he required —

The minister sat up suddenly in his chair; something like an electric shock had gone through him. No! these things were no longer all he required! He wanted someone — someone who cared! someone who spoke his language, who loved the things he loved, who saw the visions he saw.

"Rose Ellen!" he murmured. "I am so lonely; so lonely, Rose Ellen!"

A sound woke him from his reverie; a slight sound from outside, as of a tiny pebble striking on glass. Not his own window, but one near, on the same story —

Now fully awake, Charles Lindsay stole to the window, and peeped cautiously from behind the curtain. A man was standing in the moonlight, looking up at the windows; a strange man, with dark hair, who stroked a dark moustache. As he stood, a window opened softly; the window next his own; the window of Miss Jimmy's room. A hand was waved; the stranger replied with a silent gesture. A moment after, something soft brushed past his door, and a stairboard creaked ever so softly, as under a little, light foot; another moment, and the outer door opened —

What wild thoughts flashed through that gentle brain we may not know; but the man who sprang to the door and rushed down the

stairs was not the mild-eyed visionary, dreaming over his books and flowers, it was the man of God, stern and militant.

Miss Jimmy, drifting upstairs light as thistledown, drifted almost into his arms. She recoiled with a low cry; his answering voice was also low, under his breath, but vibrant with passion.

"Come to me!" said Charles Lindsay. "I will save you! I will protect you. Nothing shall harm you; do you hear me? Nothing!"

The little nurse, looking up, saw his face alight with the same look it had worn when he had rushed into the shop to save her from the clutches of Dan Wilson; but this time she felt no hysterical tendency. A little sob broke her voice as she murmured, "Bless your heart!" Then with a swift movement she drew him up the stairs with her, beckoning as she did so to the sheriff, who followed with noiseless step.

There was a little empty room or light

closet just opposite the room where the Royals slept. Into this Miss Jimmy drew her two companions. A few whispered words informed the minister of the situation.

"I didn't want to disturb you," she said, "but I'm more than pleased to have two witnesses beside myself. Now if you'll stand right here, I'll open the door — I oiled the hinges well, and there'll be no noise — so we can see in case the money is still in the room."

She stepped forward — and stepped back as quickly; for even as she spoke the door of the room opened, and Earl Royal confronted them.

He was asleep; no doubt whatever of that. The set face and glaring eyes sent a shudder through the minister's sensitive frame, but Miss Jimmy surveyed them with a satisfied little nod. With a silent gesture she called their attention to his hands, which were empty. For a minute or two the sleep-

walker stood motionless, and seemed to be listening; then he moved forward, and the watchers drew back into their hiding place. He came straight towards them; paused, with blank, unseeing eyes fixed upon them; then he turned to the right, and began to mount the attic stairs.

Obedient to a sign from Miss Jimmy, the two men slipped off their shoes, and silent as shadows the three conspirators followed. Now and then they caught their breath as a board creaked under their cautious tread, but the sleep-walker took no notice; steadily he went up the steep, ladder-like staircase, never pausing or faltering. Once in the wide attic, he stood for a moment, then going swiftly to the further end, dropped to his knees before a chest that stood there; opened it, and seemed to search with eager, trembling fingers. When he rose again, he held in his hand a bulky brown envelope.

He now stood for some time perfectly still, as if considering; his face, which was

turned toward the watchers, was drawn into distressful lines. Presently he spoke, in a high, quavering voice.

"It must go into the bank! I *must* put it in the bank, and I can't find the way!"

"This is the bank!" said a low voice. Miss Jimmy was beside him; one light hand was laid quietly on his arm, the other took hold of the envelope gently but firmly.

"This is the bank!" she repeated. "Your money is deposited!"

Mr. Royal drew a long breath, and his face cleared for a moment; but soon the anxious lines deepened again, and he held out his hand with an uncertain movement. "The receipt!" he said. "I must have a receipt!"

For one instant Miss Jimmy was at a loss. The next, a paper was slipped into her hand; a folded sheet, covered with precious notes for a sermon on Isaiah XI: 7-9.

"Here is the receipt!" said the low, steady voice. "Take it, and go home!"

Earl Royal's fingers closed convulsively on the paper; he gave a little ghostly laugh, which made the sheriff's blood curdle within him, as he afterward confessed.

"Go home!" said Miss Jimmy again. "Go downstairs; go to bed; go to sleep! go!"

There was another long sigh of relief. Then the sleeper turned, and slowly, steadily, made his way across the attic and down the stairs; and slowly, steadily, the three shadows trailed in his wake.

. . . . . .

"Oh! Miss Dolly! oh! Miss Dolly!" cried Mr. Lindsay.

Miss Jimmy became suddenly aware that there was no apparent reason why the minister should be holding her two hands tight, and saying her name over and over, and that the sheriff was looking surprised.

"Oh, Mr. Lindsay!" she returned, drawing her hands gently away. "Now go straight to bed, won't you? like a good

man, and put this all straight out of your head! Mr. Comstock, you'll find your bed ready in that little room I showed you, off the sitting room. Good night, gentlemen both, and I thank you a thousand times. We have done a good job this night."

"I'm sure I haven't done a thing!" said the sheriff. "I'd have been glad to, and I wouldn't have missed seeing your handling of the case, ma'am, not for a good deal; but far as I can see, you could have done full as well without either one of us."

"Oh, indeed I couldn't!" said Miss Jimmy. "First place, he wouldn't have believed a word I said, unless I had you to back me up; and second place,— well, I tell you I needed Law and Gospel both to keep me from saying 'Boo!' right in his face!"

CHAPTER XII

OLD TIMES

"AND now for a tell!" said Miss Jimmy.

Captain Applegate was having what he called a Benefit. Once a month Jane Burrill went to spend a day and a night with her sister in Cyrus, and on these occasions Miss Jimmy came to take her place and keep the old gentleman company. It was her own arrangement from the first. She said Jane ought to have a day off now and then; and the good, anxious soul accepted the proposal thankfully.

"Of course I wouldn't leave him with anyone else," she said, "not for royal gold! but a trained nurse is different, seems as though, and I do feel free to leave him with Jimmy, though I wish she realized his age more."

Having seen Miss Burrill off, with cheerful exhortations to "have a good time now,

and not worry about us young folks!" the two friends returned gleefully to the house, and set about having their own good time in their own way. First Miss Jimmy opened all the doors and windows, letting in the sunshine and the sweet air.

"It *will* fade the carpet!" she said; "Jane is right there; but I say let it fade, don't you?"

"That's right! that's right!" chuckled the Captain. "I always thought that pattern was too bright; I told Marm so thirty years ago."

Then Miss Jimmy put on her apron, rolled up her sleeves, and proceeded to make nut cakes, or vanity buns, or any other special dainty the Captain fancied; he sitting meantime in the broad, comfortable kitchen armchair, shelling peas or paring apples, and making himself, Miss Jimmy declared, so useful she didn't see but she would have to engage him to help her at home.

"I always used to help Marm, you re-

member!" he said. "Jane never will let me touch anything, fear I'll cut myself or something; but my hand is steady enough, far as I can see."

"Jane is a noddy!" said Miss Jimmy. "You might crack those nuts for me now, Cap'n, if you've a mind to; you *are* so handy!"

Then came dinner, the best dinner that a Captain's heart could desire, always winding up with apple turnovers, because Miss Jimmy's turnovers were — well, there are no words to describe them! and then by and by a walk, or possibly a drive behind Messenger, whom good Sam Shute had placed absolutely at Miss Jimmy's disposal for these occasions; and then, before supper and the rubber of backgammon which was the serious business of the evening, came the hour which was perhaps the most precious to the old Captain of all the precious holiday.

The big armchair was brought out on the back porch, which overlooked the small,

sweet garden behind whose tall lilac bushes the sun was setting. Here Captain Apple seated himself, and lighted his pipe. Miss Jimmy took her place on the step of the porch, her straight little back against one of the bark-sheathed cedar posts. Out came her knitting, and the shining needles began to fly.

"Now for a tell!" said Miss Jimmy.

"What a girl you are for tells!" said Captain Applegate happily. "What shall it be this time? How sweet that yellow briar is! Grandmother Applegate planted that briar, or the parent to it, the year I was born."

"Tell about her; about Grandmother Applegate and the house. And remember, Captain, I am only eight years old, and I never heard about it before!"

The Captain shook his head chuckling. "You are a case!" he murmured. "You certainly are, Jimmy! Well! this house was built by my grandfather, Simon Applegate, in the year 1790. The old house burned,

and he built this one, and brought his bride home to it. She was a beauty, by all accounts; she was well-featured even as an old woman, with hair like snow and eyes like black di'monds, and a color in her cheeks like a rose, no less. That white rose with the blush heart; see? That's like Grandmother Applegate. But for all she was soft and pink and pretty, she was a master woman, sir; a master woman! I never heard her raise her voice, and she never had need to; folks stepped where and how she bade them. I can see her now —"

The old man paused, and a far-away look came into his eyes.

"Show me!" said Miss Jimmy softly.

"Learning of me my letters!" the Captain dropped back into the homely speech of his childhood. "There was no village to speak of in those days, only our house and your grandfather's, Jethro Dolly that was, and Loreno Shute's store. No school! Later on they hired a teacher, and boarded

her round, but when I am telling you of, we were learned at home. You know how broad the hearth is, a third the breadth of the kitchen. Well, father or grandfather would rake the ashes out all smooth and nice — or sometimes they would bring in sand and smooth that out on the hearth — and then grandmother would take her stick and make letters and words, and I lie on my stomach and learn 'em. '*A* is two long sticks leaning together, and a little one across the middle.' I can hear her now! 'Round *O* is like the moon; crooked *S* is a snake with a curly tail; *T* wears his hat on his head'; and so forth and so on. If I did well, I got a piece of sugared flagroot — dear me sirs! I wonder if 'twould taste as good now as it did then! If I did poorly, I got the birch. I can see her this minute, sitting straight as a spar, pointing the letters, and I can feel the fire on my face; open fires, you understand; no stoves in those days, nor as long as grandmother lived; she

couldn't abide new fangles, as she called them. If it was evening, she would have the widow beside her —"

"Who was that?" asked Miss Jimmy.

"Who was what? Oh, the widow? Now don't say I've never told you about the widow, all these tells we've had! 'Twas a little oil lamp that hung on a string stretched the length of the room. There was a ring to it, so you could move it along the string. I never knew why it was called widow, unless from Elijah and the widow's cruse — oil, you understand — it might be that; however 'twas, this little widow was grandmother's luxury, and the only one she ever had, so far as I know, except her gold beads, that she always wore, day and night. Where was I now? I do ramble, as Jane says."

"Why shouldn't you ramble? It's just what I asked for, and what I love. You were learning your letters by the firelight. No kind of light to study by, but your eyes

seem to have stood it. And what came next?"

"Well, when I got as far as ciphering, father had a new contrivance. He got out a nice little pine board, and planed it smooth as glass on both sides; made a kind of wooden slate, see? I'd cipher away — always took to ciphering — till I had both sides covered close with figgers; then he'd plane it off clean and I'd begin again. Yes, they took good pains with my education, father and grandparents; mother died when I was but a baby.

"Speaking of ciphering puts me in mind of another old fashion. You're sure you care to hear all this farrago, Jimmy?"

The old gentleman broke off, and looked wistfully at his companion. "It takes me back so — but you mustn't let me wear you all out."

"I look worn out, don't I?" said Miss Jimmy. "Captain, I wouldn't lose a word you are saying,— why, don't you *see* how

interesting it is? All these things are gone forever, out of sight and sound, and you are bringing them back as clear as day. Do go on!"

"Well! that's how it looks to me, I confess!" said the Captain with a happy sigh. "The past is past, I say, but it had its value, sir, it had its value. Nowadays, a man has everything put into his hands, or into his mouth, as the case may be; he has to look out sharp, or his brains may rust in his head. But in those days he had to *scratch* his head, and get his brains to work; had to think, and plan, and manage, and try things out. All kinds of shifts and ways they had to make; some of 'em curious to think of. Take the hats, now!"

"What about the hats, Captain?"

"Why, don't you know? Every man — round these parts at least — wore a tall beaver hat when I was a boy; real beaver it was then, no silk or felt in those days. 'Twas farming country round about then,

as it is now. Well! nowadays, you know, when a man brings in his truck and produce, he has his little book in his pocket; and he puts down his figgers and tots up his sums, and all complete. But in those days there weren't any little books in these parts, so what does he do? He does his ciphering with a piece of chalk on the top of his hat! Fact! I can see father's hat now, all covered with figgers, and he casting 'em up after he came home, and squaring up his accounts, and then brushing it off all neat and smooth. There was always a box of chalk handy by the front door, ready for the tax-gatherer."

"What upon earth did chalk have to do with the tax-gatherer?" inquired Miss Jimmy.

Captain Applegate laughed, and stroked his whiskers with an air of enjoyment. "There it is again! Thenadays and nowadays are two different propositions. Nowadays it's a printed form and a two-cent

stamp, and that's all there is to it. The taxgatherer just has to fill in his figgers, and post his letter, and Uncle Sam does the rest. But when I was a boy, old Jeremiah Thrasher went his rounds to every house in the township, far or near; and every house he came to, he'd chalk up the amount of the taxes in the front entry, on the wall, behind the door. Dear me sirs! How often I had to be told not to rub out the taxes, sidling along the wall the way children do! Well, then on his way back Jeremiah would stop again, and if the money wasn't ready there'd be a pretty how-d'ye-do. Yes! business-like man, old Jeremiah; and always in a hurry, no time to hear excuses. 'Pay up!' he'd say. 'Pay up! I've got the cows to milk!' That was about all he ever said, or so 'twas reported. They did say — but I always supposed that was gossip — that when he was getting married — married late in life, a widow with a cock eye and a good head of stock — the minister had some

difficulty in finding the place in the service book, or else he stuttered, I forget which; anyhow, he didn't get on fast enough to suit the bridegroom, for Jeremiah called out: 'Speak up! speak up! I've got the cows to milk!'

"No rambling about Jeremiah Thrasher! And come to that, I expect I have rambled enough for one day, Jimmy Dolly. There you sit still as a mouse, and take in all my old stories, and all the time your own little head is full of things I want to hear. It's your turn now; I'll sit back and smoke, and do you tell me all you've been doing this week. Why, I haven't seen you since Sunday; there's no knowing what you may have been up to!"

Miss Jimmy considered, her head on one side, her fingers flying. Then she laughed. "Much as usual, I guess!" she said. "Jim of all trades, Cap'n Apple! I don't know where the time goes, but I know I don't have enough of it to turn round in before it's the

middle of next week. Let me see! I was here Sunday, wasn't I? And we went to meeting together. What a sermon that was! Monday, Dr. Wiseman took me out to West Tupham on a case, and I spent the night. Tuesday, Finey had a spell, and I stayed with her mostly, and let Persis do my puttering for me. Dan had a boil on his neck, too, and I had that to lance and dress. I did his chores too, so there wouldn't be any complaints."

"I bet you did!" said the Captain. "Don't make too much of Dan, Jimmy!"

"I won't! I want to make a man of him, and it's making, as fast as ever I saw a man make. The next thing is to get him married to the right woman, and then I can turn him loose. I believe I've found her, too."

"You are a case!" murmured the Captain. "Who is she, Jimmy?"

"She's the woman where I went with Dr. Wiseman the other day. Mrs. Penny her name is; a widow, and as nice a little woman

as I need to see. One of the children was sick; she has three, and her husband died three years ago, leaving her nothing but the farm, which is all run out, and was poor soil to start with. She has been doing all the work, except for hiring a man for planting and haying and the like of that; and she keeps the children neat and clean — soap and water is cheap, as she says — and what's more, keeps them well and happy; and all on less than George Greengrass pays for his cigarettes a year. I — well, I won't swear, but I want to sometimes. So I was thinking, bring her into the village, and put her into that little brown cottage that the Sawyers have just left — who owns that cottage, Captain?"

"Jimmy Dolly! you know well enough who owns that cottage. You little scheming —"

"Well, I rather thought you did!" Miss Jimmy admitted with a little laugh. "If you would let her have it for half-rent the

first year, Cap'n dear, she could take Dan to board — he has been sleeping in our barn, and it makes Earl nervous, fear of fire — and do washing, either at home or going out. She's a lovely washer and ironer, I saw that from the children's clothes. And — Dan right there, you see, and both of them well-disposed, and both lonesome — I never saw a smarter woman, or one that I took to so at first sight — don't you see, Cap'n Apple?"

"I see!" said the Captain. "All women are born match-makers, they say, and there's no question about you, Jimmy!"

"Well, if the Lord left it to the men —" said Miss Jimmy demurely; "anyhow, I never tried to make a match between you and Jane Burrill!"

"You'd better not! If I was forty years younger, it wouldn't be Jane I'd be marrying, Missy. Getting on for supper-time, isn't it?"

"Nimshi!" Miss Jimmy looked at her watch and started up.

"I should say it was! My griddle ought to be hot this minute of time, if we are going to have Indian sluppers. Then I may have the brown cottage for half-price, Captain? She is such a nice woman, and *so* poor!"

"You may have it for nothing, you little witch — if she will do my shirts decently. If ever a man was imposed upon —"

"You are a darling!" cried Miss Jimmy. "Now come along, and we'll get supper together!"

It seems strange now to think that only two little years ago we did not have Mary Wilson. All went precisely as Miss Jimmy had planned it. Dan and Mary married within the year, and became our good angels in their humble degree, as Miss Jimmy was in hers. Mary did (and does) our fine or extra washing, wove our rugs, helped with

our housecleaning, our preserving and pickling, our making and mending. Moreover, she completed the making of a man of her faithful Dan, so that in due time we forgot that he had ever been the village scapegrace and scapegoat, and knew him only for what he was at bottom, an Israelite without guile.

CHAPTER XIII

CONCERNING THE COMING IN OF SHIPS

On her way home next morning (Jane Burrill had returned beaming, with several tragic anecdotes, and a new recipe for bone-set balm, warranted to "search the entire system!") Miss Jimmy met Persis Shute. The girl came flying along the road, her head up, her eyes shining like dark stars, her cheeks like sunset after storm; a different Persis indeed from the sullen, down-looking girl of six months ago. She had been cheerful enough all summer, ever since she took hold with Baby Quin, but this was something very different, this air of triumph, this glow of light and color and joy. What did it mean? Miss Jimmy asked herself.

"Well, Persis!" she said, as the girl paused a moment, like a bird on the wing.

"What has happened? Has your ship come in?"

"Yes!" cried Persis, with a little tremulous laugh. "I — I guess it has, Miss Jimmy. You know you said — you know you told me I would be happy some day, and I didn't believe you; I thought I knew better. But oh, I am! I am!"

She laid her hand lightly over her heart, as if something precious were resting there; gazed at the little nurse with sparkling eyes; then threw her arms round her neck and kissed her, and ran on, laughing over her shoulder, the same little happy, tremulous laugh.

"I'll tell you soon!" cried Persis.

Did Miss Jimmy need to be told?

"It has come!" she said to herself. "It is what I planned and plotted for, and now it has come. I haven't a word to say!"

A few steps further, and she met Mr. Lindsay. Was it her fancy, or did he too look different from usual, raised to some

higher plane of feeling? His eyes were always bright, but surely there was a new look in them; a look of hope, eagerness, resolve? Her own eyes must be dull, Miss Jimmy thought. She had not slept over well these last few nights. But she greeted him with a gay little smile.

"Good morning, Mr. Lindsay! Sister well this morning? I hope you missed me last night, all of you!"

"Good morning, Miss Dolly! Mrs. Royal appears to be in her usual health, so far as I observed at the morning meal. We did miss you! I — we all missed you, my friend, most wofully!"

"Now!" said Miss Jimmy. "I am glad and sorry all in one, Mr. Lindsay. It's pleasant to be missed, but I can't have you sorrowful, you know!"

"May I walk home with you? Will you permit me to carry your bag? Allow me!" and he took her bag before she could offer any resistance. Miss Jimmy was not used

to having her bag carried; she generally carried other people's. She stole a glance at the minister, as he walked beside her with long strides. Certainly he was agitated. His hands trembled on the handle of the bag; his color deepened, his eyes shone.

"I have had all I can stand for one day!" said Miss Jimmy to herself.

They walked along the road — it was the road Miss Jimmy loved best, winding along by the river, set with willow copses and white birches, with here and there a bower of white clematis or a thicket of cinnamon roses — and for some minutes neither spoke. Then — "I had such a pleasant time with Captain Applegate!" said Miss Jimmy in her tranquil, cheerful voice. "He told me a parcel of stories about old times at his house when he was a little boy. I do love to hear old people tell, don't you?"

"No! that is — yes, assuredly! I beg your pardon, Miss Dolly!" said Mr. Lindsay.

"Captain Applegate is most certainly a — a — oh, quite so!"

"He told about his own childhood — it's strange to think of him as a little boy, but he must have been a dear then, as he is now — and the odd ways and fashions in those days. It seemed as if I saw it all, he made it so clear."

Her companion made no reply. He was gazing at her with wide, troubled eyes. He certainly looked feverish; she restrained an impulse to lay her hand on his pulse.

"Mr. Lindsay," she cried; "you are not well! What is it?"

The minister waved his hand.

"Perfectly well!" he said. "So far as the fleshly envelope is concerned, perfectly well. The mind, my friend; the — the heart — Miss Dolly! my esteemed and admired friend; I also have something to tell you. May I — have I your permission to speak?"

"Not just now!" Miss Jimmy's breath

came quick and short, and her cheeks were burning; but her voice did not sound so strange as she had feared it would.

"I — I'm so sorry, Mr. Lindsay, but I — I have to go in here before I go home. Some other time I shall be most happy to hear your — your good news. Good morning!"

She vanished inside the house before which both had unconsciously paused for an instant. Charles Lindsay, left alone, stood staring at the door for a few minutes, as if hoping to see the little light figure reappear. Failing in this, he sighed long and deeply; tried to put the bag on his head, and finding a hat already there, seemed utterly at a loss, and stood gazing at the bag in mute bewilderment. Finally, collecting his scattered senses, and with one last sad look at the house, he departed.

Miss Jimmy meanwhile found herself inside the dwelling of "those Benders." The phrase conveyed a subtle reprobation;

in fact, we were not proud of the Benders. They did not belong to Tupham, anyhow; they came from Tinkham way, a district of which we thought little. They managed to keep just within the law, though there were those in the village who thought George Bender responsible for many of the lawless acts which were formerly charged to Dan Wilson. They were idle, and dirty, and shif'less (without the *t*!) altogether the village looked askance at them, and wished them away.

Miss Jimmy, whisking suddenly in at the door of the tumbledown hovel (it was nothing more; it was the one blot on the pretty road, and we did not see how Billy Batchelder could sleep in his bed and such premises belonging to him!), found herself face to face with a tall, gaunt, gipsy-looking woman, sitting in a broken chair, smoking a pipe.

"Morning, Aunt Jane! how's the rheumatism this morning?"

Mrs. Bender grunted something by way of salutation.

"Tain't no better!" she said; "nor 'twon't be while this weather lasts. What do you want this time, Miss Jimmy? You ain't goin' to annoy me no more, are you? I wish't you'd let me alone, so I do!"

At her last visit Miss Jimmy had swept the house and washed the windows; now —

"I've come to give you a bath!" she announced cheerfully.

"You ain't! I won't! you shan't!" cried Mrs. Bender, clutching the arms of her chair. "You let me alone, I say! I don't need no bath; I ben't goin' to die, be I?"

"What a way to talk!" Miss Jimmy was filling the stove with wood and the kettle with water as she spoke. "I've got some new liniment that is going to knock spots out of your rheumatism, Aunt Jane, but it won't take hold on any place but has been washed and dried. Just you wait, and we'll —"

The poor old gipsy moaned and whimpered, but all was of no use.

"Where shall I find some clean clothes?" Miss Jimmy went on. "Any in this bureau drawer? Yes, here are some! what did I tell you?"

She took out a decent calico gown and some underwear; the old woman raised a doleful cry.

"Put them back! they are for layin' me out in. I wish to goodness you'd let me alone, Miss Jimmy Dolly. I never done you any harm."

"Look here, Aunt Jane! you aren't going to die for ten good years; I'll get you a new set before then, truly I will. Just wait now and see —"

"I don't want no bath!" cried Mrs. Bender. "Water don't agree with me, never did, all my life! Oh! don't, Miss Jimmy! oh! oh!"

"I gave her a good one, I tell you!" said Miss Jimmy when, some time later, she

went in to dress Mrs. Shute's arm, scalded the day before.

"Poor old soul, she screamed like a pig; but I had the liniment in my pocket, and after she had a good rub and was dressed up all clean and fresh, she felt fine. Why, she's a good-looking woman, come to get down to her real features. Then I made her a cup of tea, and left her feeling like a fighting cock. I'll send Dan down with a bit of something nice for her dinner, so as to mark the day with something pleasant."

"That George will eat it all up!" said Mrs. Shute, whose arm was painful, and who was taking a less cheerful view of life than usual.

"No, he won't! I'll tell Dan to stand by and see her eat it, every scrap. Dan could hold George Bender with one hand and shave himself with the other. Does that feel good, dear?"

"Lovely! it was paining me something terrible. Thank you, Jimmy! how did we

ever get along without you? But sometimes — you won't mind my saying this, will you? Sometimes you do seem to me to be spending your time and strength to little purpose. Now what good will one washing do Jane Bender? She has been the way she is for going on eighty years."

"Well!" Miss Jimmy considered, her head on one side. "It's something to be clean and comfortable just once, Mrs. Shute, isn't it? That's once more than never; and it wouldn't be creditable to her or to anybody if she had to tell folks in the next world that she didn't know what it was to be clean. She knows now, anyhow. Of course I can't change her over, poor old soul; but — well, I thought the liniment would comfort up her rheumatism, and it did; and then — well, you remember what Mr. Lindsay said on Sunday about the stranger within our gates. I thought of Aunt Jane then, and I felt ashamed. 'I *can* wash her!' I said; and following that, I was led to her door this

morning, without my knowledge. I'm glad I did it!"

"Well, you are a case!" said Mrs. Shute. "And I am bound to say that you seem to have made over that Tanner family, root and branch."

"Ah! that was different. There I had something to go upon. The woman was young, and she cared for her children. All the trouble was, her husband had that long illness, and she got all worn out, and had little or nothing to do with. All she needed was nursing and care, and something to make a new start with, and she went right ahead. Nice little woman!"

"Jimmy! Jimmy!" said Mrs. Shute. "Well, you'll get your reward somewhere, I suppose. Hark!" She raised her finger and listened. "Hear that girl!"

Someone upstairs was singing; the song came ringing down, clear and fresh and joyous.

" Of all the lasses on the quay I know,
Yo ho, lads, yoho!
Yo ho, yo ho!
There's none so fair as Nancy Lee, I trow,
Yo ho, lads, ho! yo! ho!"

" Persis?" Miss Jimmy looked at Mrs. Shute, who nodded several times slowly and emphatically.

" I don't know what has come over the girl!" she said. " She went down to the postoffice, and came back looking like — well, like a lighthouse, if you know what I mean. She came running in here, and ran straight up to me and gave me a squeeze that took my breath; she hasn't hugged me like that since she was a little piece. Then off she goes upstairs, and she's been singing off and on ever since. I haven't heard Persis sing," she added slowly, " for two years. Not since Joe Powell went away."

" Joe Powell!"

" Anson Powell's son. He seemed sweet on Persis that last winter he was at home,

and I thought likely something might come of it; but toward the last of it they had some falling out, I don't know what about. He went off to sea again; and when I made mention of him one day, Persis flashed out, and said: 'Don't you ever speak Joe Powell's name to me again, mother!' So we've never spoken of him, and he's never come back so far as I know — Anson Powell over to Cyrus, you know; it was only Persis brought him over here. They met at some quilting party, or church sociable, or like that; good-looking fellow he was, smart and upstanding. But Persis has never been the same girl from that day to this. Hear her! she used to be singing like a bird, all day long."

"The sailor's wife the sailor's star shall be!"

sang the girl. You could hear the rapture throbbing in her voice.

"The sailor's wife the sailor's star shall be,
Yo ho! we go
Across the sea!"

"I wonder," said Mrs. Shute slowly; "I wonder if — she is beginning to think of any person else!"

"I shouldn't wonder a bit!"

Miss Jimmy rose with her little birdlike spring. "'Twould be only nature, Mrs. Shute. I — I hope — I hope Persis will be happy; she deserves it, and she is good enough for any man, even — for *any* man! No, don't call her down; I must be going. I shall see her soon."

The little nurse went out smiling, her chin held up gallantly; but once out of sight of the house, and out of hearing of that triumphant song, her head drooped, and the springing step lagged. She crept home wearily, to tend and amuse Finey, who was fretful that day.

And all the while Persis was singing as she moved about her room — singing, and looking in the glass with eager, shining eyes, and pulling over her simple fineries to find the prettiest and most becoming, and singing again.

And all the while Charles Lindsay was sitting forlorn in his room, needing help with his specimens (two could analyze so much better than one!), needing help, and longing for it, and not daring to ask for it.

"I have offended her!" he said to himself sadly. "She avoids me. She understands, but she will not listen to me. I am very, very lonely!"

CHAPTER XIV

OUTSIDE THE POSTOFFICE

GOING to the postoffice that same afternoon, Miss Jimmy found a letter postmarked "Boston," and bearing her own name in a bold, firm hand.

"Dr. Barry!" she said.

What could the great surgeon be writing to her about? They had been friends these many years, and had worked side by side in hospital and sickroom. Probably he wanted her to take a convalescent patient, or to come on for an operation.

"Well, I can't!" said Miss Jimmy, and opened the envelope.

Just beside the postoffice stood a huge willow tree, sprung, tradition said, from the staff of the first settler in these parts, the patriarch Elkanah Tupham. "Elkanah's

walking stick!" the old people loved to call it. In one side of the vast knotted trunk was a niche or recess in which a person who was not too tall or too stout might stand. Into this niche Jimmy Dolly had retired to read the first letter she ever received. (It was from Billy Batchelder, and it said: "You no need to of thrown away that gum. I had only had one chaw off'n it.") Ever since then she had regarded it as her own place, and had read her letters there whenever she was at home. So now she stepped lightly into the niche, and settling her shoulders comfortably in the hollow, proceeded to read her letter.

She read it through carefully and slowly, three separate times; yet it was short, and extremely clear. Dr. Barry was about to start a small private hospital, and he wanted the best nurse he knew to take charge of it. Would Miss Dolly come? The salary would be so and so; he trusted it would be satisfactory. If there were any chance of

her being able to come, he could give her a week to consider; if there were none, would she kindly telegraph at once?

Miss Jimmy folded the letter and put it back into the envelope; then she stood for a long time motionless, looking out through the screen of leaves. The willow branches drooped almost to the ground; she was completely hidden from view; she stood there, looking out — into her other world.

The long white room; the spotless beds; the faces on the pillows, pallid or flushed, suffering or peaceful; the nurses in their blue gowns and snowy caps and aprons; the white-clad men going to and fro with their strong, quiet faces, their controlled voices, their every movement instinct with power, life, intelligence; the clean, tonic odors that were sweeter than roses to her nostrils. Above all and through all, the sense of great forces imminent, the clash of mighty wings; Death knocking at the door, Life trembling on the threshold, and one's own small strong

hands coming — or so it sometimes seemed — between the two, closing the white door, lifting the fainting figure, guiding the faltering steps —

Miss Jimmy thought she had dismissed this vision for good and all a year ago; but here it was back again in power, possessing her, shining before her eyes, crying in her ears: "Come back! come back to life, and work, where life and work count for something, make toward something. Hear the call; come back!"

She never knew how long she stood there; it might have been half an hour, it might have been thrice as long. A small thing brought her back; nothing more than her own name, spoken in a high, childish voice.

"Miss Jimmy said so; so there!"

"Said what?" responded another piping voice.

"Said black finger-nails was mourning for the Emperor of Morocco, and he wasn't dead yet, so we mustn't."

A little smile crept into the corners of the firm-set mouth. One of the Sawyer children, whom she had seen through scarlet fever. A very sick child that one had been. It seemed one night — the Moore children were very sick, too; the eldest girl's eyes would need watching for six months to come. Then she thought of the children's wards —

People came and went by the great willow, on their way to and from the postoffice, Sam Shute, taking Beulah for a late afternoon drive with Messenger. Miss Jimmy smiled again as she noted how briskly the old horse stepped out. Sam hadn't liked to ask Dr. Wiseman to attend him when he had the scratches, and she had brought him through "ekal to the best vet from here to the Pacific Coast," as Sam said.

Old Man Cotton; he was stepping spryer, too, since she gave him that last rubbing, with the same liniment she had used for

Aunt Jane Bender. Poor old Aunt Jane! how she did squeal!

Then came Jane Burrill, mincing along with her melon-seed reticule and her black lace veil and mitts, the very pattern of gentility.

"Dear Cap'n Apple!" sighed Miss Jimmy. "He would miss me, too!"

Who next? Persis, hastening along with a letter to post, her eyes still shining, her cheeks still flying that brave flag of joy and triumph. Miss Jimmy shrank back further into her niche. Then — last — came Earl Royal.

Mr. Royal was not an attractive object in himself; he had a cold, which reddened his nose and caused his eyes to water. But suddenly, behind him, beside him, inseparable from him, came a vision which all in a moment swept the other out of existence. Finey! the sweet, pleading mouth; the dark eyes, clear as mountain pools; the whole great organism, cream-white, satin-smooth,

velvet-soft, which for her — as indeed for him! he had that much sense, it must be admitted! — held all the world of beauty and grace and sweetness. Leave Finey! She seemed to see the corners of the perfect mouth droop and quiver, the beautiful imploring eyes fill with tears. The white arms were outstretched to her, the soft cooing voice was in her ears.

"Sister! help me, will you?"

The branches rustled as the light figure stepped out from the willow niche, a very practical-looking dryad. Mr. Royal looked up; looked again; stopped in amazement.

"Jemima!" he said. "You here! it is five o'clock. I opined that you were at home, preparing supper."

"Did you?" said Miss Jimmy absently. "I've got to send a telegram. You go start up the fire, and I'll be along directly."

It might have been a week after this that Miss Jimmy was coming home after spend-

ing the evening with Susan Quin, whose husband was away lumbering, and who had begged for a good visit from her adored friend. Returning after a happy baby talk, she came quietly up the garden walk, and stopped in the porch to tie up a loop of clematis that brushed her face. The door was open, and the voices in the room within sounded clear and distinct.

— "a house of our own!" "I don't know how much longer I can stand this, Sylphine. A man requires privacy after his day's work."

"Oh, Early!" answered the soft, melodious drawl. "If Mr. Lindsay is in your way —"

"I wasn't alluding to Mr. Lindsay!" said her husband acidly.

"But there's no one else, only me and sister!"

"I don't wish to hurt your feelings, Sylphine, but that is one too many. Can't your sister take up her trade again?"

"Oh, Early! I am sure sister does the best she can!"

"I don't say but she does, Sylphine; she surely does her best to get her own way, and she gets it, one way or another; and I — I — I want *my* way!"

The thin voice broke into a high quaver. "It gives me indigestion not to have things the way I want them; it always did! my health is suffering!"

"Oh! Early darling, don't say that! you shall have anything you want!" cried Sylphine.

"I want a home of my own! I want you should see it as I do, and realize that we'd be happier by ourselves; that's what I want!"

"I — I do! it would be — real pleasant, Early. Only — only what would I do without sister?"

. . . . . .

There had been no sound as the little brown figure crept down the garden path to

the gate. Now, the gate shut with a loud metallic click, and firm steps crunched on the gravel.

"Well, folks!" said Miss Jimmy cheerfully, "it's nine o'clock, and here you sit. Time we were all in our little beds. Come, Finey!"

Charles Lindsay's light burned over long that night, but for once Miss Jimmy never noticed it, and no friendly knock on the wall admonished him that it was past bedtime. The little nurse stood at her window, looking up into the sky. The moon rode high, the stars shone peacefully, but there was no peace in Miss Jimmy's heart. Fiercely she looked up, her eyes blazing, her hands clenched at her sides.

"You've got to help me!" she said. "You made him, and you've *got* to help me. She must get well!"

. . . . . .

Next morning the village was shaken to its foundations by the news that Miss Jimmy

was ill. Dan Wilson delivered the thunderbolt with the milk, offering to each astonished housekeeper a face of disaster. He had gone to the house as usual, at six o'clock, expecting the open door and the cheery greeting which, as he often said, set him a-going for the day. He found the door locked, the blinds down, the house silent. After waiting awhile he knocked, and presently Miss Jimmy's window opened, and there she was, looking like her own ghost.

"I'm sick abed!" she says. "You come in through the shed and call Mr. Royal! you might start the fire — no, you needn't! tell him I'm sick, that's all! No, I don't want Dr. Wiseman; and anyway, he's sick himself."

"That was every word she spoke!" said Dan. "I had to clamor good to wake them folks, now I tell ye! They're used to take their ease and lie wallerin' in the mornin', while she ups and does their work and puts the victuals into their mouths. There! if

I hadn't got religion, Miss Shute, I'd say darn their hides; but the Lord don't allow me no freedom of language."

When Persis hurried over an hour later, she found a strange condition of things. The kitchen fire was lighted, and the air was full of the odor of burned porridge. Mr. Royal, in scanty attire, was fiddling (Persis's expression) with the coffee pot, while his wife, huddled in shawls and comforters in her armchair, faltered out advice as to the proper measures needful for the making of coffee.

"This is terrible!" cried the gentleman, as he caught sight of Persis. "I have never prepared a meal in my life. I — two great spoonfuls, Sylphine? You mean teaspoonfuls, don't you? No wonder coffee is a costly item, if you expend it so recklessly. My mother, I am confident, used only two teaspoonfuls for a whole pot of tea."

"Here!" said Persis, with a brevity worthy of her instructress. "Give me the

coffee pot, Mr. Royal, and go on and finish dressing. I'll get breakfast!"

But when, breakfast ready, Persis sped upstairs on the wings of affection and anxiety, a fresh shock met her. Miss Jimmy, sitting bolt upright in bed with the clothes drawn up to her chin, greeted her with unexpected asperity. She didn't want anything, she was obliged to Persis. No, she wouldn't have any coffee. She had been overeating, and she was bilious, and that was all there was to it, and she was going to lie by for a spell.

"And you go home, Persis!" she said, not unkindly. "Your mother needs you, and we don't. But here's what you can do," she added, and a flush crept into her pale cheeks; "take Mr. Lindsay over home with you, and keep him two or three days till I'm all right again. No need he should suffer for want of good food!"

"But why?" cried the astonished girl. "Why mayn't I stay and do for you all,

Miss Jimmy dear? Mother can get along all right, she'd be glad to. Do, *do* let me stay! why, it's what you've taught me to do! what's the use of my learning, if I can't take care of you when you're sick?"

Her eyes filled with tears, and she looked imploringly at Miss Jimmy. "And they *can't* take care of themselves!" she added. "They are helpless as the babe —"

Something in Miss Jimmy's face checked her. For a moment hazel eyes and brown looked deep into one another.

"Why!" she spoke slowly, feeling her way from word to word. "Why, you — don't — want them to be done for! you — you mean they should find out —"

She remained silent for a moment. Then, "I think I see!" she said. "I — think — I see, Miss Jimmy dear!"

Miss Jimmy made no sound.

"I'll go!" said Persis. "But oh, how do I know you won't starve?" And — her eyes lightened, and the crimson flag

flew once more in her cheeks. "Oh, I want to tell you, Miss Jimmy! You know — you know you asked me the other day had my ship come in, and I said I guessed it had? Oh, my dear, what do you think? I am —"

"Miss Shute!" a high, thin voice yapped up the stairs. "Where are you? Come down! Mrs. Royal is going to have a spell!"

Persis fled, with one backward glance of love and wonder. When she was gone, Miss Jimmy covered her head with the bedclothes and groaned.

"If there isn't a hell now," she said, "there'll be one made o' purpose for me. Lord forgive me! and oh, Lord help her, my poor sweet precious lamb, to find out as soon as may be that there's nothing in creation the matter with her!"

CHAPTER XV

HOW THE MINISTER MADE COCOA

PERSIS did her best to carry out Miss Jimmy's instructions in regard to Mr. Lindsay, but without avail. The minister positively refused to go. He was deeply sensible of Miss Shute's kindness; he fully realized the hospitality of herself and her excellent mother, but he should remain at his post. If the illness of their beloved friend should prove serious — which Heaven forbid! — he might be of use in carrying messages, writing notes, and the like.

"And in any case," he added with gentle pride, "I can perhaps be of some little assistance in the — the culinary department. I am not wholly without experience of housekeeping, my dear Miss Shute. I can make toast, and — with the aid of the printed in-

structions — cocoa! it is my fervent hope that in some small way I may be able to minister to the physical well-being of this — this admirable woman who has so often ministered to mine!"

His eyes shone. His face was that of a seraph prepared to do wonderful things with a coal from the altar. Persis looked at him, and went away without a word.

All that day Miss Jimmy stayed in bed; and as she said afterward, what went on in that kitchen the dogs only knew. The next day she was better; came downstairs, and established herself on the lounge in the kitchen. From this position she directed matters, feeble but undaunted.

"We'll have a batter pudding to-day!" she announced. "Earl likes a batter pudding, and I know there's plenty of eggs."

"Oh, sister!" cried Mrs. Royal, opening tragic eyes. "I can't make a batter pudding! It takes a gift, you always said so."

"Well! can't I make over a gift?" asked

Miss Jimmy gayly. "Besides, you have seen me make it a hundred times if you have once, my lamb. Four eggs, now, and a quart of milk! don't you remember?"

Piteously lamenting, Mrs. Royal slowly heaved her bulk out of the chair into which she had recently sunk exhausted after the labor of filling the kettle.

"That Persis Shute is the most heartless creature ever I saw in my life!" she said. "To leave us this way, after all we've done for her! Oh! sister, do you think we need to have a pudding to-day? My arms ache so! isn't there a pie? It's strange if there isn't a pie, I must say."

"Not unless you've made one this morning!" said Miss Jimmy. "You had the last of mine for supper last night. Do you remember the day I didn't make any dessert, because I had a hurry call to a sick baby? Well, then!"

Her voice was as nearly stern as Finey

had ever heard it, for Mr. Royal's shrill recriminations still echoed in her ears.

"*No dessert!* is this what you call housekeeping, Jemima? A slim meal always disagrees with me!"

Well! he got his come-uppance in that jam roly-poly next day; 'twasn't only the slim meals that disagreed with him!

"Bring the tray here, honey!" she said, "and I'll show you just how, so you can't make a mistake if you try. Break your eggs carefully — that's right! now beat 'em till they scream! take it slow and steady — arm ache? Take your left arm for a bit! now you're talking! that's my beauty lamb! as clever as she is pretty, she is!"

Poor Sylphine was still laboring and sighing over the bowl when Mr. Lindsay entered, his hands full of delicate purple blossoms. At sight of the little figure on the couch, trim and gay in its scarlet jacket, his face lit up like a lamp, and he almost dropped his flowers.

"My dear friend!" he cried joyfully. "My dear and valued Miss Dolly, what happiness to see you again, clothed and — a — a — in short,— I am so glad to see you!" he concluded lamely.

"Me too you!" said Miss Jimmy cheerily. "Yes, ever so much better, thank you, Mr. Lindsay! and what pretty things have you there? Oh, fringed orchis! how lovely! I didn't know it was out yet."

"I gathered them for you!" said the minister happily. "I apprehended — at least I hoped — they might afford you pleasure. I will put them in — a receptacle —"

A shriek from Miss Jimmy checked him as he was dropping the flowers into the bowl of beaten eggs, which Mrs. Royal had left while she wandered off in search of the milk.

"Not there, sir! that's the pudding for dinner. Take that white pitcher on the dresser! thank you a thousand times, Mr. Lindsay; you are so good to me!"

"I am not!" replied the minister sadly.

"I have done nothing as yet, but I fain would help — ah! eggs! I can mingle them! permit me, Mrs. Royal!"

Miss Jimmy sighed, and wrung her little hands under the coverlet. Never were eggs so mishandled since the beginning of time, she thought, but what could she do? Finey grasped at the offer, and relapsed into her armchair with a moan of relief.

"You're real good, Mr. Lindsay!" she said. "My arms pain me something frightful. I never *could* beat eggs!"

Mr. Lindsay was so happy, he beamed so seraphically over the mishandled eggs, that Miss Jimmy threw the pudding to the winds. No matter if it did fall; if only it did not upset Finey as well as —

Finally it was huddled into the oven after a fashion, and Mr. Lindsay, flushed and triumphant, looked about him for new worlds.

"Why!" he cried. "This is my opportunity! you — you are still far from well, my dear friend. You will — I should

imagine — restrict yourself to a light diet today? I will make you a cup of cocoa!"

If with such a look he had proposed to make her a cup of cold poison, Miss Jimmy could not have said him nay; such innocent joy, such heavenly glee, never, she thought overspread a human countenance. She assented gratefully. Then it was a sight to see Mr. Lindsay searching, under her direction, for the cocoa can; to see him bring forth in turn mustard, baking powder and starch, producing each with the same air of cherubic triumph; to see him, when at length the right can appeared, arriving by the same process of elimination at the capture of a saucepan; to see him with bent brows and shining eyes studying the printed directions on the can; finally, to see him, spoon in hand, bending over the stove, stirring the brown fragrant mixture with might and main.

And then, that which was to happen happened. Alas! in his eagerness to bring in his trophies, he had forgotten to empty his

pockets into the covered crock in the inner porch; his pockets, teeming with mosses and ferns — nor with these alone! His back was turned to Miss Jimmy; Mrs. Royal had closed her eyes for a moment after her exhausting labors on the pudding. No one saw the little green creature make its way out of the gaping pocket and, after balancing a moment on the edge, leap to its fate in the boiling pot.

Never, since his Rose Ellen left him, had Charles Lindsay known so happy a moment as that when he bore the brimming cup to the sofa, and handed it to his friend. Miss Jimmy's face, too, was lighted with a lovely look, and there was a soft color in her brown cheeks. She took the cup with the prettiest thanks, declaring it was just what she needed, and would set her up for the day, she knew it would. She lifted the shining spoon; she stirred the cocoa — she paused. The color deepened in her cheek. A moment, and then — would Mr. Lindsay be so

very good as to close that damper? she asked. The oven would heat better for the pudding.

His back turned, she lifted the spoon —

"Well! the French eat 'em!" said Miss Jimmy to herself. "Don't be a fool!"

The couch stood by the open window; there was a swift noiseless motion; when Mr. Lindsay returned, Miss Jimmy, her face a deep crimson, was still stirring her cocoa.

"Is it too hot?" he asked eagerly. "Is it too sweet? Is it —"

Miss Jimmy looked him full in the eyes. "It is delicious!" she said, and drained the cup.

Miss Jimmy never liked to talk about that week. Slowly and painfully, with dire lamentations, Sylphine was pushed — almost *butted* —through the simplest processes of cookery. She had learned them in her childhood, as every proper New England child does, but long disuse had atrophied such sense as she had had — never very much — and memory slept.

"All our fault, mother's and mine!" Miss Jimmy said to Mrs. Shute. "I haven't a word to say. The poor lamb has been spoiled from her cradle up. Look at the way she handles that kettle! every minute I think she'll scald herself."

"H'm!" said Mrs. Shute. "How are you feeling to-day, Jimmy? Be up round pretty soon, think?"

"Oh yes! A few days now and I'll be as good as new. You have to lie by about once in so often, to keep in good condition, don't you think?"

"H'm!" said Mrs. Shute again. "Did you ever lie by before since you were born, Jimmy Dolly?"

"There has to be a first time for everything!" said Miss Jimmy boldly. "What is it, Finey? Yes, rub your butter and sugar to a cream. Yes you can, darling! take it easy! Here's Earl coming in, and he'll spell you a bit."

Probably nobody really enjoyed the week

except the minister. He went about in a happy dream; one might almost say that he lived in an atmosphere of spiritual toast and cocoa, such exalted joy did he derive from the preparation of these delicacies. There were no more frogs, but there always might be, and Miss Jimmy never failed to stir the beverage well — to dissolve the sugar, she said.

Soon Mr. Lindsay developed further ambitions. He had noticed, he said, that his esteemed friend was partial to eggs. For his own part, he could never see an egg without marvelling afresh at this wonderful and beautiful object. It seemed almost sacrilege to destroy its perfection of form and beauty of tint; but doubtless an all-wise Providence had considered, in moulding it, the needs of perishing humanity as well as the — a — protection and preservation of the embryonic fowl. Quite so! There was an ancient saw respecting the security with which an egg, an apple or — a — a nut, might be — a —

but he perceived it was too homely to quote in the present company.

"But I think," he added, gazing admiringly at the smooth brown object resting in the hollow of his hand, "I think, dear Miss Dolly, that with the aid of a timepiece or an hour-glass I could boil this egg, or even poach, or — as our neighbors say — drop it —"

Here he dropped it, and was overcome with confusion, and had to be mopped up and consoled.

. . . . . .

It was Sunday evening. Miss Jimmy had persuaded Sylphine that it would do her good to go to meeting, and would please Earl besides; so with many sighs she had heaved herself into bonnet and shawl and departed with her spouse. Mr. Lindsay had started earlier; Miss Jimmy had the house to herself. She lay motionless on her couch till she heard the garden gate click shut; then she counted one hundred slowly, in case they

had forgotten something, and should come back for it; then — with one spring she was on her feet.

Quick, now! only an hour and a half — or it might be two if he had special freedom in discourse — and a week's work to be done. Broom, dustpan, mop, pail — hither, all ye helpful sprites of cleanliness and industry! hither, and give your aid in such a cleaning as never yet kitchen saw!

If anyone had looked in at the kitchen window just then, he would have been amazed indeed — if he were of the village — to see the invalid working away with all the pent-up energy of a week's inaction. She brushed, she swept, she scrubbed, she scoured; all in a kind of frenzy of ardor. She polished the stove till it shone like a well-blacked shoe; then she fell upon the kettle, and polished that, till she actually had to stop for breath, and stood panting, kettle in one hand, brush in the other. Thus standing, she chanced to raise her eyes, and be-

came aware of other eyes staring at her through the little window; brown, dog-like eyes, full of horror and amazement.

For one moment she caught her breath, startled; then she said, "Oh bother! come in, Dan!"

Dan Wilson came in, stepping gingerly over the threshold, and holding on by the door-jamb in manifest terror.

"Miss Jimmy!" he faltered. "Oh, Miss Jimmy! be you dyin', or — or what?"

"Dying yourself! do I look like dying? Here! take this broom and reach up and get those cobwebs down! I can't get at them. *My stars!* cobwebs in my kitchen!"

"Oh, Miss Jimmy! praise the Lord! yes'm, I think they're all out now. Oh! Miss Jimmy, you — you feel quite like yourself, do you? You don't think — your mind is goin' or anything?"

"I don't think so!" said Miss Jimmy composedly. "If I feel it going I'll let you know. Now you've got mud on that chair!

Dan Wilson, you ought to know enough by this time to wipe your feet when you come into this kitchen!"

"I do. I will, Miss Jimmy! I'll wipe it up keerful. But oh! it give me such a turn! to come here with that news to tell, and find you — the way you was —"

"What news to tell? Speak up, Dan, and don't be a ninny! I'm perfectly well, as well as ever I was."

"Oh, Miss Jimmy! the Lord be forever praised! but Mis' Batchelder, she's visited with a stroke! Yes, 'm!" as Miss Jimmy uttered a cry of distress. "She is so; and lays speechless this minute, and Mr. Billy bellerin' for you to the four corners. I told him you was sick and couldn't come nohow, but he would have it I should come and tell you; he thought maybe you'd send a message. Doctor's sick abed too, and they've sent over to Cyrus for Dr. Whittaker."

Miss Jimmy's foot was already on the

stair, but she turned to speak over her shoulder.

"Set the chairs straight, Dan, will you? and put things back in place while I'm getting ready; you can carry my bag for me. I'll be ready in two minutes!"

CHAPTER XVI

MR. BILLY

If little has been said in these pages about Aunt Lindy Batchelder and Mr. Billy, it is because the tenor of their way was so extremely noiseless that there was little to say. Aunt Lindy's husband — old Woodenhead Batchelder, as he was called — had made money in ice and lumber, and left a comfortable little fortune behind him. The preservation of this fortune was — after his duty to his mother, whom he loved devotedly — the main object of Mr. Billy's life. As he himself put it, "I inherited a little property — a *very* little property — and I aim to keep it!" He had an office in the street, where he spent a certain number of hours every day; as to what he accomplished there, opinions differed. To someone ask-

ing where Mr. Billy did business, Sam Shute once replied, "If you can find any place under the blue canopy where Billy Batchelder ever does anything, I'll give you ten dollars!" But Aunt Lindy thought he worked too hard, and often begged him to take a little rest, and not wear himself out before his time.

For the rest, mother and son lived together in the large, comfortable old house, and were happy; and everybody loved Aunt Lindy, and most people agreed that there was no special harm in Mr. Billy.

But now the cheerful house was desolate. The kindly mistress, whose delight it had been to keep every corner in it spotless and shining, lay helpless and motionless in her bed, her capable, housewifely hands crossed idly on her breast; and the master — only one could not fancy Mr. Billy master of anything! — fidgeted up and down, wringing his hands, and begging Mrs. Shute every five minutes, to "do something!"

"Can't you do something?" cried the poor gentleman for the twentieth time. "Can't you get her so she can speak, Mrs. Shute? Oh! if she would only speak and tell me how she feels! we always tell each other how we feel, mother and I, morning and evening; it's a way we have. This morning she said, 'Billy,' she said, 'I feel better than common. I think I'll put up some raspberries to-day.' And I *got* the raspberries," he cried; "they are in the shed this minute, and she lies there! Oh! I wish Jimmy Dolly was here! she would think of something, I know."

"Do sit down, Billy!" said Mrs. Shute compassionately. "Jimmy is sick herself, you know, or she would be here, I make no doubt. The doctor will be here soon; I look for him any minute."

"It's a strange thing for a nurse to be sick!" wailed Mr. Billy. "I — I don't hardly see how a nurse *lets* herself get sick.

She ought to know enough to keep well, and be on hand when she's wanted."

"Be on hand when she's wanted?" said a cheerful voice. "Who's that, Billy? Will I do?" and Miss Jimmy stepped lightly in at the open piazza window.

"Jimmy Dolly!" cried Mrs. Shute indignantly. "What business have you to be here this time of night? Go home this minute! there! I misdoubted you were up to some trick all this time!"

"Go home? Not I!" said Miss Jimmy. "I've come to stay, Aunt Shute. It's you who ought to go home, woman dear. I'll go right up!"

"Oh! Jimmy!" cried Mr. Billy. "You'll think of something, won't you? Mother sets the world by you; you'll fix her so she can speak and tell me how she feels!"

Alas! Aunt Lindy was never again to describe her feelings to that anxious listener. Day after day passed, and still she lay mo-

tionless, her eyes following Miss Jimmy's motions wistfully, her lips now and then trying to form a word, but no sound coming from them.

Dr. Whittaker from Cyrus came and looked, shook his head, and went away. Old Dr. Wiseman, struggling out of the clutches of lumbago, came and looked, and sighed,— Aunt Lindy had been his first love, it was said,— prescribed this and that remedy that might be tried, and could do no harm. Miss Jimmy tried everything, deftly and cheerfully; tended the patient, kept the house (Aunt Lindy had never been willing to have any hired help; they made her nervous, and Billy was better than any woman with glass and silver, she always said), and did her best to cheer and comfort the disconsolate gentleman. When thoughts of home came, and of Finey moaning over the cooking, she drove them resolutely away. "I am here now," she said, "and she is there. And he has the privacy of his home

— *his* home! — and one day is all we have to live at a time, anyhow."

From Mr. Lindsay, who came to inquire for the invalid and even more anxiously for herself, she heard that Mrs. Royal appeared to be in somewhat more robust health than formerly, though he feared the care of the household weighed heavily upon her. Mr. Royal, he opined, was suffering from indigestion; there had been more or less irregularity about the meals — most natural, and indeed probably unavoidable, under all the circumstances — but — a — Mr. Royal's nervous habit of body was such that —

"Oh!" broke out the minister; "it is so forlorn without you, my friend! *so* forlorn!"

A week passed, and Miss Jimmy began to look grave — when no one else was in the room. This state of things might go on for weeks or months; even — for the strong old body showed little sign of weakening —

for years. Every day some anxious inquiry was made for herself. When could she come and rub Miss Nim's poor back, bandage Mr. Sawyer's lame ankle? There was a sick child, too, and the mother didn't know anything, Dr. Wiseman said. "You are needed all around, Jimmy!" said the old doctor. The two looked at each other and shook their heads.

Miss Jimmy made up her mind.

"Billy," she said, "you'll have to get a regular nurse!"

Mr. Billy stared at her. They were sitting at the breakfast table, and he was really almost enjoying his sausages.

"Regular nurse!" he repeated. "Why, aren't you a regular nurse, Jimmy?"

"I expect I'll pass for one!" said Miss Jimmy dryly. "I mean another one, Billy. I can't stay after this week, I'm afraid."

Mr. Billy's exclamation was almost a scream.

"Can't stay! what do you mean, Jimmy?

You can't go, and leave me this way, and mother lying there! why — why, I don't know what you can be thinking of, Jimmy Dolly! you seem to be losing your senses."

"Of course I shouldn't go till the other nurse came," said Miss Jimmy; "but this is the way it is, Billy. Aunt Lindy may be a long time in this condition; you have got to look that in the face; and I am needed elsewhere. I have had three calls this afternoon, places where there was real need. I'll write this morning to a first rate nurse I know who is at liberty just now — I had a letter from her only yesterday — and I'll stay on after she comes till your mother is used to seeing her and having her do for her, and then I'll slip away. I'm sorry; I hate to leave the dear soul, but I think I'll just have to."

Mr. Billy raised a piteous outcry. He couldn't abide strangers, neither could mother. He should be sick himself, he knew he should, and mother would pine

away. Jimmy was cruel; he never would have believed it of her, and they friends since they were born. Finding Miss Jimmy firm in her resolve, he departed for his office, where he spent the morning in arduous meditation. When he returned at dinner-time his smooth roseate countenance wore a look of firm resolution. He was very grave at dinner, took only one helping of beefsteak pudding, and would have put gravy instead of whipped cream on his lemon jelly if Miss Jimmy had not stopped him.

Dinner over, and Miss Jimmy about to clear the table, he requested her to wait a moment, as he had something to say to her. He walked up and down the room several times, straightened the tidy on the back of a chair, and then proceeded to make a careful scrutiny of himself in the looking glass.

"*Well!*" said Miss Jimmy incisively. "What is it, Billy? You're just as handsome as you were this morning, if that's what you want to know."

Mr. Billy fingered his small moustache nervously. "Sit down, Jimmy!" he said. "I — I — was desirous of saying something to you; something of a serious nature!"

Miss Jimmy looked keenly at him. Then she perched on the edge of a chair, like a brown bird in a white apron.

"I'll give you five minutes!" she said. "Go ahead!"

"Don't hurry me!" said Mr. Billy piteously. "Serious things require time, and — and reflection. I — I — do you think the sausages were quite done this morning, Jimmy? I feel a sort of casting about within me, as if something hadn't set any too well."

"They were done to a turn; you said so yourself. You are nervous, Billy. Come; get it off your mind! speak up!"

"That's right!" said Mr. Billy. "I *am* nervous; and I've often noticed that my nerves seem to centre in the stomach. Would you like me to tell you just how I

feel, Jimmy? It would interest you, being in your line as it were, and 'twould be a comfort to me."

Miss Jimmy glanced at the clock. "Your five minutes are almost up," she said. "Suppose we take your feelings this evening, when I have more time! I ought to —"

"No!" cried Mr. Billy desperately. "Wait, Jimmy! I'm nerved up to it now, and if I run down again there's no knowing —" he blinked rapidly, drew a long breath, looked wildly round him, and went on with a rush.

"I — I — I — I am a single man, Jimmy!"

"So I've always understood!" said Miss Jimmy briefly.

"I have never — a — married, because — for a variety of reasons — it has seemed inexpedient so to do. Seemed inexpedient so to do!" he repeated the telling phrase with evident relish. "But if I *had* thought

it well to marry, Jimmy, you would have been my choice."

"Is that so?" said Miss Jimmy. "That's kind of you, Billy!"

"I always liked you best of all the girls. I — tell you the truth, I did think of asking you, one time when mother was ailing; but then you went away, and mother got her health again — and so — you see!"

"I see!"

"But now!" Mr. Billy rose and paced the room again. "Now here's mother laid low, and female help — skilled help — needed for a considerable period, you say. There's nobody I'd care to have round the house, nor nobody mother would, unless 'twas you, Jimmy; so what I was thinking was — a — in short,— we might get married now, right away!"

Miss Jimmy's eyes flashed for a moment; then they began to twinkle. Mr. Billy was looking anxiously at her.

"You are used to the house, you know,

and you — you would keep it the way mother always has; and we — and I think we could be very comfortable, Jimmy. You know I always liked you best of all the girls, don't you?"

"Yes, I know!" Miss Jimmy's tone was dry enough; but when she next spoke, after a few minutes' silence, it was softer.

"Billy," she said, "do you remember the chewing gum?"

"The chewing gum?" repeated Mr. Billy vaguely.

"When you were twelve and I was ten, you made me a present of a piece of chewing gum. You had bitten into it already, and I — I threw it away. You wrote me a letter about it; don't you remember? You said I needn't have thrown the gum away, you had had only one chew off it. It was the first letter I ever got!"

Mr. Billy looked bewildered. "I don't know as I do remember," he said; "of course 'twas a pity to throw away a good

piece of gum. It's excellent for the digestion. And you have remembered it all these years? Then you mean —"

"I don't know that I mean anything that I can just put into words, Billy; only I can't marry you!"

"Why not?" Mr. Billy looked at her in amazement, "Why — why, Jimmy, you don't know what you're saying. Here's the house, and the garden — you know well what an excellent garden piece it is — and me and mother, and — why, what more do you want, I should like to know?"

"I know!" Miss Jimmy's eyes were still twinkling. "I know it's a handsome offer, Billy, and I appreciate it, I truly do; but all the same I'm afraid I can't accept it."

"Good gracious!" Mr. Billy looked still more bewildered. His eyes traveled slowly round the room, with its air of quiet, dignified comfort, its old mahogany and shining silver; then they came back to the little fig-

ure, trim and erect, perched on the edge of the chair.

"You'd better consider it, Jimmy!" he said ruefully. "I really don't know what more you could expect, or — or any woman could expect, that was of suitable years. There's others in this village would — is it because I have been in the habit of saying I couldn't afford to marry? I — there have been reasons, Jimmy; there have been reasons! but I will say to you now, between these four walls, that I am tolerably well fixed. Only tolerably!" he added hastily. "But you are such a good manager, I am sure we could get on. And you mightn't — well, you are not so young as you were, you know, Jimmy, and — and — why, you *like* me, don't you? The girls have always liked me; mother always said I was real popular; *she* thought I could take my pick; but I'm aware she was partial; you like me, don't you, Jimmy?"

"I like you, Billy; but all the same I can't

marry you. No!" as Mr. Billy tried to speak again. "I can't, and what's more I won't, and that's all there is to it; except that I am very much obliged to you, Billy dear, and I know it was good gum — I mean, I know you are a good fellow, and we'll always be the best of friends, won't we? There! now I must go upstairs, and I shall write to Miss Ayer to-night."

Well! we all know what came of that in the end. Emily Ayer that was makes him an excellent wife, and manages the house well. But when Aunt Lindy died, six months later, poor Mr. Billy's hair turned gray, and he never dyed his moustache again.

CHAPTER XVII

ALL'S WELL

A FEW days after Miss Ayer came, Aunt Lindy had a bad turn, and both nurses were busy from morning till night. Miss Jimmy ran up and down stairs all day long, with hot water, with ice, with twenty other things. She was hardly conscious of her body; the little machine sped up and down, hither and thither, as the alert mind bade; she knew nothing, thought of nothing, but the patient.

Flitting upstairs on one of these many errands, she happened to glance through the broad window on the upper landing — and stopped. Involuntarily her hand went to her heart; her breath came short and quick, her eyes dilated, and she stood staring.

Persis Shute was passing along the street;

Persis, and — who beside her? The slender, apostolic figure she had so resolutely pictured to herself as walking beside Persis, often, always, through life? No indeed! This was a broad-shouldered athletic figure in seaman's dress. A man of twenty-five, as striking in his sturdy Viking way as she in hers. His brown face was alight, his blue eyes flashed merrily down into the girl's; he was talking and laughing excitedly. And she — Miss Jimmy needed but one glance at her hanging on his arm, gazing up into his face, the whole vivid creature aflame with joy. Now she laughed, and the sound came ringing into the quiet house like a peal of bells. Truly, Persis's ship had come in, and Joe Powell was master of it and her.

Miss Jimmy sat down on the stairs, and pressed her forehead against the balusters, sobbing little breathless sobs. For three minutes, perhaps, she sat there; then she got up and shook herself, and sped on her way.

At the door of the sickroom she paused

again, and surveyed herself relentlessly. 'All in order? No quiver of nerve or muscle? No thought but of the patient?

She entered with her usual quiet step and tranquil look; and what became of the little tempestuous mob of feelings left outside no one will ever know.

By evening, the untoward symptoms disappeared, and Aunt Lindy lay as before, placid, silent, resting after the long working day of her life. About eight o'clock Miss Jimmy stole downstairs once more, to soothe and comfort poor distracted Mr. Billy, and get him some supper. It was a stormy evening of wind and rain. Wild gusts shook the windows, rattled at the doors, swirled down the chimneys, sending puff upon puff of ashes out into the carefully kept rooms. One such gust swept at Miss Jimmy as she entered the dining room, and blew out her candle. She groped for the matches, relighted the candle, and doing so, was aware of a letter lying on the table. It had been

there all day, but this was the first time she had been in the room.

She took it up, read her own name in Earl Royal's elaborate handwriting, and opened it with a sinking of the heart that recalled the day when she learned of her sister's marriage.

"Dear Jemima," she read; "We have been looking to see you ever since we heard that Mr. Batchelder had secured a thoroughly trained nurse."

"Weasel!" muttered Miss Jimmy.

"I thought surely your sense of duty would recall you to do for your sister, who is quite exhausted by her exertions; but I have no wish to reflect. This is to inform you that being offered a partnership in a firm in Cyrus Centre, I have accepted of it, and have decided to move at once. We shall board, as Mrs. R.'s health is not equal to the cares of housekeeping. I have secured rooms at the Centre House, and expect to

drive Sylphine over this afternoon or to-morrow morning. She hopes you will send her things after her, as she does not feel equal to the packing.

"I feel that the change will be the best thing for Mrs. R., and hope you will be reconciled to it in time. A woman shall forsake all, as you are aware, and cleave only unto him. I wish you well, Jemima; and trusting that this experience may be sanctified unto you, I remain

"Yours truly,

EARL ROYAL."

Underneath was written in a round, childish, tremulous hand,

"Dear sister, we are going to board at a hotel, and I always wanted that more than anything else, and I cannot keep house, my limbs will not hold me up. But come and see me, Jimmy, won't you?

"So no more

"from SYLPHINE.

" P. S. Can't you come over to-night? I don't want to go without seeing you, sister, and I don't know where all my things are.

"FINEY.

" P. S. They have shore dinner twice a week, and ice cream."

Miss Jimmy looked at the clock.

" Billy," she said, as the forlorn little gentleman wandered into the room, " you'll have to get your own supper. The cold ham is in the cupboard, and there is potato salad in the ice-chest. I'm going home! " and she was gone.

Running, running, through the wind and rain! down the hill, along the pleasant elm-shaded street; the little feet hurrying as they had hurried all day, the little heart beating wildly; one word saying itself over and over — " Finey! Finey! " Her lamb, her pretty, her own child that mother gave her — going away! She herself had left home, but that was different; she had to go; and she knew

always that Finey was there, serene and beautiful, ready to be cared for, to take all she had to give her, whenever she could get back. Oh! Finey, Finey! At every step her sister seemed to rise before her in some new aspect. The beautiful baby that Mrs. Shute put into her outstretched arms, with, "There! if you ever see such a handsome baby again! or such a big one — twelve pounds, as I am a living woman!" The lovely two-year-old child, all cream and roses and dimples, stretching out her rounded arms, taking her first toddling steps, for sister. The gentle, lazy schoolgirl whom she had pushed and pulled through her lessons. The grown girl, blossomed out into the perfect rounded rose of womanhood. She saw them all, loved them all, took them all to her heart. Then — then —

She struck her little hands together passionately, and hurried on the faster.

So fierce were the blasts of wind and rain, she held her head down as she ran, never

looking up from the well-known path. Even when she reached the house, she did not stop to notice whether the windows were light or dark, but hurried up the garden path, up into the porch — to find the door locked. Then she looked, and saw the windows dark, the shutters closed.

"Finey!" she cried. "Finey! you haven't gone without bidding me good-bye! Finey!"

No answer came. She beat wildly on the door — her own door, closed in her face; all was silent, save the roar of the wind, the rush of the train. Then, suddenly, her strength went from her; she sank down on the doorstep, and covering her face with her hands, burst into bitter weeping.

Was it minutes or hours that she sat there, the rain beating in upon her, the wind snatching and tearing at her? Was it minutes or hours that passed before the light came?

Bobbing and dancing it came down the street, wavering hither and thither; a lan-

tern, carried by someone in haste, who did not look to his steps; someone who, coming to the garden gate, and seeing the little figure crouching on the doorstep, quickened his pace to a run, dropped his lantern anyhow, anywhere, flung himself down beside her, gathered her in his arms, crying out in broken tones.

"My darling!" cried Charles Lindsay. "My little brave, wonderful, esteemed and precious creature! I have found you at last! And you are all wet! your little beautiful feet are wet! The key — I went to tell you that they were gone! I went by the lower way and missed you. They — Mrs. Royal left her kindest love —"

Talking incoherently, he felt under the doormat, brought out the key, and unlocked the door; then — Miss Jimmy still sitting as if dazed — he lifted her bodily in his arms and carried her into the house.

There was a fire in the kitchen. He set her down in front of it in her own rocking

chair; he wrapped a shawl round her; then, down on his knees, he began to pull off the little wet shoes and stockings.

"Oh! don't!" cried Miss Jimmy faintly. "You mustn't do that, Mr. Lindsay!"

"I must! I will!" said the minister. "You have taken care of others all your life; now you are going to be taken care of, and by me. I declare it in the sight of Heaven!"

"Bless your heart!" said Miss Jimmy.

"If you will marry me — to-morrow —" he hurried on, as he chafed the little cold feet in his hands, "I will be your faithful and loving husband and servant till death do us part. But if not, dear Miss Dolly, if — if my many shortcomings, of which I am painfully aware, render me unacceptable to you, I will still be your servant, to labor for you, and — and cherish you, in whatever manner may be most agreeable to you. I would not urge you to a decision, my beloved friend, in this moment of weariness.

I — I am about to make you a cup of cocoa; but if you could tell me by a look or sign that I have not offended you, Miss — oh! may I, just this once, say Jimmy?"

"Bless your heart!" said Miss Jimmy.

THE END